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## Weekly Synoptic Analyses, 5-, 2-, and 0.4-Millibar Surfaces for 1968

STAFF, UPPER AIR BRANCH,  
National Meteorological Center

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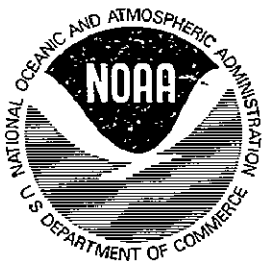
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# Weekly Synoptic Analyses, 5-, 2-, and 0.4-Millibar Surfaces for 1968

(Based on meteorological rocketsonde and high-level rawinsonde observations)

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**ABSTRACT.** Data from meteorological rocketsonde and rawinsonde observations have been employed to analyze a series of high-altitude synoptic charts. Methods employed for processing the various types of data and the analysis procedure used are described.

Broad-scale analyses of the 5-, 2-, and 0.4-mb surfaces, primarily covering North America and adjacent ocean areas, are presented at weekly intervals for 1968. A brief discussion of the height and temperature fields is also given. Circulation and temperature changes associated with a major stratospheric warming during January are among the discussion items.

## INTRODUCTION

This volume represents the fifth in a series of constant-pressure charts for the upper stratosphere, based on rocketsonde and very high level rawinsonde data obtained over North America and adjacent ocean areas. These charts have been analyzed by the Upper Air Branch of the National Weather Service's National Meteorological Center (Staff 1967a, 1967b, 1969, 1970).

At 5 mb, both rawinsonde and rocketsonde data were used to derive the height and temperature fields. Above 5 mb, rawinsonde data were seldom available, and rocket observations constituted the basic data source. The Station Model and Reporting Rocket Stations chart (p. 13) shows the locations of 20 meteorological rocket launch sites within the map analysis area for which data were available in 1968.

The present series of analyses at weekly intervals includes charts for the 5-, 2-, and 0.4-mb surfaces (approximately 36, 42, and 55 km, respectively), nominally representing broad-scale synoptic conditions

on each Wednesday of the analysis period. In addition to a description of the techniques employed in obtaining these charts, a brief discussion of large-scale features is also included.

## PROCESSING OF RAWINSONDE DATA

The preparation of high-level data for analysis presents many problems. Some of the difficulties encountered in the use of rawinsonde information, such as achieving compatibility between daytime and nighttime observations, extrapolation and interpolation of data, and identification of erroneous reports, have been summarized previously (Finger et al. 1965, 1966).

Temperature and height adjustments designed to compensate for instrumental radiation errors were applied to all 5-mb rawinsonde reports. Initially, an adjustment was made which reduced values from daytime observations to the level of those values reported from nighttime observations. Magnitudes of these day-night adjustments, which are intended to account for the

effects of solar heating on the rod thermistor, were determined with the aid of a computer program that calculated monthly mean differences between reported daylight and darkness values. Input to this program consisted of all available 5-mb data for 1964 and 1967 from stations in North America and adjacent ocean areas that employ U.S. outrigger-type radiosonde instruments (for details of the adjustment and further references, see McInturff and Finger 1968).

Theoretical and laboratory studies of the rod thermistor used in present-day radiosondes indicated that a significant error may be induced by infrared cooling at stratospheric levels above about 10 mb. Therefore, a second adjustment (Barr 1966) was added to all reported 5-mb data, including observations made actually in darkness and daytime data that had been adjusted for solar-radiation error. The magnitude of the temperature correction is a function of reported temperature, while the height adjustment varies linearly with the temperature correction.

Rawinsonde data utilized for the 5-mb charts were processed by computer methods. Inputs to the computer program consisted of observations from North America and adjacent ocean areas for 7-, 5-, 4-, and 3-mb levels in the form of punched cards obtained from the National Weather Records Center. Output listings included all observations for 1 week at each station. Data for levels other than 5 mb were also listed to supply the analyst with as much supplementary information as possible. Thermal winds and corresponding horizontal temperature gradients were computed for the layers from 7 to 5, 5 to 4, and 4 to 3 mb.

After processing, the rawinsonde-derived temperature, height, wind, and thermal wind were plotted on work charts. For charts presented in this publication, the rawinsonde data have been omitted for the sake of legibility.

## PROCESSING OF ROCKETSONDE DATA

Winds and temperatures measured by rocketsonde systems comprised the basic data sample for analyses at the 2- and 0.4-mb levels, and were also used in combination with rawinsonde data for the 5-mb charts. Rocketsonde information was obtained for this project in the form of magnetic tape, identical in format to published information contained in the *Meteorological Rocket Network (MRN) Firings* (World Data Center A 1969).

The procedure for extraction of rocketsonde information and for computation of heights of the 5-,

2-, and 0.4-mb surfaces was as follows:

- a. Wind and temperature profiles were processed by a computer program, designed to reduce the amplitude of rapid oscillations in the vertical by using a simple (1-2-1) smoothing technique. This processing was done because analyses are intended to portray only the broad-scale stratospheric features.
- b. Temperatures were modified above 40 km in accordance with Drews' (1966) publication, one of several theoretical studies (see the review article by Ballard 1967). For the Arcasonde 1A, the instrument most widely employed during 1968, the correction applied to the temperature profiles increased from 1°C at 42 km to about 9°C at 58 km.
- c. An initial estimate of the geopotential height for each station at the respective pressure levels (5, 2, and 0.4 mb) had to be made before the temperature for that particular level could be selected. This estimate was obtained by deriving the temporal trend of the geopotential height for the station from the lower level analyzed charts and by applying this trend to the geopotential height for the station as shown by the previously analyzed chart. The temperature at this estimated height was then extracted from the temperature profile.
- d. The true geopotential height of the pressure surface at each station was then hydrostatically computed for each available temperature profile. This height was obtained by deriving a layer-mean temperature between the extracted temperature of the upper level and the temperature obtained from the previously completed lower level analysis. Computer-analyzed 10-mb charts (Environmental Science Services Administration 1968), based exclusively on rawinsonde data, were used as foundation for hydrostatic computation of the height of the 5-mb surface. For the 5- and 2-mb levels, a constant lapse rate was considered representative. However, because a temperature maximum (associated with the strato-pause) usually exists between 2 and 0.4 mb, mean temperatures were derived by using values extracted at each whole kilometer between these two pressure levels.
- e. Wind components were extracted from the smoothed profiles at the height of the constant-pressure surface, and a resultant wind was computed.

f. Thermal winds were determined for 6-km layers surrounding each pressure surface at the reporting station.

The rocketsonde data (temperature, height, wind direction and speed, and thermal wind) were plotted on work charts. On the charts presented for publication, three observations are shown when available for each station. Heights and thermal winds have been omitted for the sake of legibility. The Station Model and Reporting Rocket Stations chart illustrates the symbols used to distinguish the data obtained on Wednesdays from off-time data.

## ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Conventional techniques, including differential analysis methods, were used to construct the 5-, 2-, and 0.4-mb charts. However, because of the sparsity of observations, data acquired for the entire week were examined to determine the synoptic changes that took place during the week. Thus, conditions pertaining to Wednesday, the analysis day, were deduced.

The analysis system consisted of the following steps:

- a. Isotherms were derived using both processed rocketsonde and rawinsonde temperatures where available. In spite of the corrections applied to the 5-mb rawinsonde temperature data, large differences could sometimes be seen when comparing rocketsonde data that were close in time and distance (Muench 1971). Generally, the problem could be resolved by giving greater weight to rawinsonde stations employing hypsometers. In a few cases, the difficulty even occurred with hypsometer radiosondes; therefore, some compromise value had to be chosen, usually closer to the rocketsonde-reported temperature. Computed thermal winds were especially useful in determining horizontal temperature gradients and the relative location of warm and cold areas. Where possible, time-height sections of temperature were plotted as a further aid in deriving the isotherms.
- b. A mean temperature field representative of the layer between the previously analyzed lower surface and the selected surface was derived graphically. This mean field represents a geopotential thickness which, when added to the lower level height field, yields a smooth, conservative first approximation to the contour pattern at the upper surface.

c. Reported winds and computed heights for individual stations were then used to adjust the first approximation of the contour field, using the assumption of geostrophic flow. Winds were accorded the highest priority for this adjustment. When large adjustments were made to the contour field, the temperature field was then adjusted to maintain hydrostatic consistency.

d. The analysis was reviewed for vertical and temporal consistency. For example, circulation centers, ridges, and troughs were examined with the aid of all available data to verify vertical slope and movement with time. Time-height sections and height-change charts were especially useful for these purposes.

The above procedures appear to produce excellent results at 5 mb, and were successfully applied to obtain the 2- and 0.4-mb charts. Generally, only slight adjustments of the first-approximation height fields were necessary at the 5- and 2-mb levels. However, rather formidable analysis problems were evident at the 0.4-mb level. One problem arises from the apparent intersection of the stratopause with the 0.4-mb level. Because the normal stratospheric temperature inversion ceases at the stratopause level, the graphical method for obtaining mean temperature, which depends on the existence of a linear profile, is no longer valid. Large adjustments must be made, especially at lower latitudes, in the graphically derived height field to conform with the computed height at each station (as discussed in the previous section).

Another difficulty was the apparent occurrence of large day-to-day temperature changes at times exceeding 10°C (Miller 1969) and persistent oscillations in many wind profiles. In most cases, deviations of reported temperatures and winds from one another could be accounted for by identifiable rapid large-scale synoptic changes. Sometimes reports within a few hours of each other at a single station exhibited temperature changes of 5° to 7°C over a limited height interval near the stratopause. It has been shown that such small-scale subsynoptic changes are possible at these levels (Miller and Schmidlin 1971). Thus, some intermediate value was chosen for analysis to represent the value on the analysis day. Occasionally, it was impossible to make a reasonable reconciliation of reported station values.

An additional problem is encountered in the summer charts. During that season, circulation at the upper surfaces (2 and 0.4 mb) would be expected to follow the pattern established for lower levels, that is, a rather uniform easterly flow about an anticyclone



centered at or very near the North Pole. However, on a typical summertime 0.4-mb chart, most reported rocketsonde winds exhibit significant southerly components. If these winds were to be given full weight in the analysis, the resulting pattern would consist of contours, oriented from southeast to northwest, spiraling toward a high center located apparently over northern Europe.

The prevalence of positive meridional components in summertime rocketsonde winds has been noted previously (Miers and Beyers 1964). Studies (Reed et al. 1966) based on MRN data for several summers have demonstrated that the meridional wind component resulting from the diurnal tide reaches maximum southerly strength at about noon, local time. Because most MRN firings occur near local noon, the measured winds naturally contain this component. Although no adjustments were made in individual reports, the analysis procedure includes suitable compensation. Differences in the reported winds and orientation of the contours may be quite pronounced, especially on the summertime charts. Strong westerly winds of winter usually mask the weak diurnal component, but there is a possibility that this component may contribute to some bias in analysis during periods of weak circulation.

Although careful consideration of high-level data allows a broad-scale depiction of circulation patterns up to 0.4 mb, the sparsity of reports requires an increasing amount of subjectivity as the analysis proceeds to this high level. As yet, the analyst has little in the way of synoptic models for guidance with respect to the probable contour and isotherm patterns and the phase relation between these patterns in areas of sparse data. The geographical area of analysis for the charts has thus been reduced in accordance with the available data. The justification for some analyses depends on the interpretation of the limited amount of data in such a way as to portray a coherent sequence of synoptic events. In spite of these factors, surprisingly little alteration in the principal features of the circulation and temperature distribution shown in the final analysis can be made without inordinately violating some of the data. In general, the contours and isotherms depicted are felt to be good approximations to the flow and temperature patterns at these levels. Even so, the same degree of accuracy that is found customarily in the analysis of charts at lower levels should not be expected.

A contour interval of 320-geopotential meters (gpm) was used throughout the year. In addition, intermediate dashed contours were used to outline

areas of relatively weak gradient, especially during the spring and fall changeover periods. Isotherms were drawn and labeled at 5°C intervals.

## DISCUSSION OF THE 1968 CHARTS

The temperature and circulation anomalies associated with the major stratospheric warming that began in December 1967 (Johnson 1969, Staff 1970) persisted into the beginning of 1968. Maximum temperatures had been observed at the end of December, with a reversal of the normal wintertime temperature gradient between the North Pole and middle latitudes occurring first at the highest levels, then proceeding downward to lower levels. Thus, at 5 mb on January 3, a wave-two pattern in the isotherms and contours was clearly seen, with the warm air stretching over the Pole associated with the two cyclones and with the cold air in the Bering Sea and the Atlantic Ocean associated with the two anticyclones. At 2 mb, cold air had returned to the polar area, with a warm area apparent over western Canada. Hydrostatically consistent with this situation was a weakening of the circulation at 2 mb and a disappearance of the North Atlantic anticyclone at the 0.4-mb level, with a strong anticyclone apparent in the eastern Pacific. The major effects of the stratospheric warming had thus diminished at the upper levels, but were propagating downward with time and were still evident at lower altitudes. By January 10, anticyclonic circulation dominated the polar region at 5 and 2 mb, but at 0.4 mb the polar cyclone had become reestablished. During the next week, the transition back to a relatively undisturbed westerly circulation could be noted at 2 mb; and by January 24, this became the pattern at the 5-mb level.

During February, the polar cyclone intensified at all levels but did not attain the depth reached before the warming. The cold air at 5 and 2 mb was somewhat displaced from the Pole toward northern Canada, whereas at 0.4 mb, warm air extending from northern Siberia dominated the polar area. Although perturbations in the temperature fields at high latitudes were noted throughout February and March, no significant departures from the basic westerly circulation of the polar vortex were observed.

The final springtime change from winter to summer conditions could be seen at the end of March at 5 and 2 mb. A warm area was first seen north of Alaska and moved over the polar region. In association with the warm area, anticyclonic circulation developed in mid-April over the Kamchatka-Alaska

region. The anticyclonic circulation was displaced northward, and an easterly circulation dominated the polar region by the end of April. The cyclonic circulation, with its associated cold westerlies, was displaced southward during May as the polar anticyclone intensified and expanded. By the end of May, the middle and upper stratosphere over the entire Northern Hemisphere was under the influence of summer easterly circulation, with the warm air centered at the Pole.

The summertime polar anticyclone warmed further during June and gradually intensified. Peak temperature and height at the Pole were reached toward the beginning of July, with maximum wind reported near subtropical latitudes. Thereafter, the anticyclone decayed slowly as the duration of sunshine decreased in Arctic latitudes. Cyclonic circulation formed in the polar area at the end of August and spread as the high latitudes cooled. The easterly circulation was displaced southward in the form of cellular ridges reaching low latitudes at the end of September and merging into the subtropical circulation. Thus by October, westerly circulation predominated over middle and high latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere stratosphere; in low latitudes, a variable easterly circulation was associated with fluctuations of the position of the subtropical ridge.

During October, November, and December, the polar cyclone deepened, accompanied by increasing westerly winds over most of the area. However, several eastward pulsations of the Aleutian anticyclone resulted in disturbances of the westerly flow over Alaska and northwestern Canada. The anticyclone first appeared on November 6 as a weak disturbance at 5 mb over the eastern Pacific. By November 20, the anticyclone was found over Alaska at all analysis levels. Rapid intensification as well as an eastward movement occurred during the next week, affecting the circulation as far east as Fort Churchill, Canada. After the initial pulse the anticyclone retrograded, but it persisted although less intense during the rest of December. High tempera-

tures were seen during this period in a warm ridge stretching from the Caribbean to southern Europe and across Asia to eastern Siberia. This subtropical system sloped northward with height in hydrostatic response to the warm air at higher levels. By December 18, the warm air at 2 mb over southern Europe exhibited measured temperatures higher than 0°C. At the same time, the axis of cold air elongated and split with one center visible over central Canada. At the 0.4-mb level, the data indicated a considerably disturbed temperature field during the last week of the year, with warm air apparent over the polar region and cold air displaced southward.

The principal features of the circulation during 1968 at five representative rocket launch sites may be seen in the time sections (figs. 1-5) of analyzed height and temperature values extracted from the weekly charts. The annual trend of the height and temperature values is most pronounced at the middle- and high-latitude stations (figs. 1-3), with the largest range of values occurring in the more northerly stations (Johnson and Gelman 1968). Superimposed on this annual trend, characterized by maximum values in summer and minimum values in winter, are various perturbations. The largest of these perturbations was in January and was associated with the major stratospheric warming mentioned above. Smaller scale disturbances associated with movements of the Aleutian anticyclone were seen in November and December. At the tropical station of Antigua, West Indies Associated State (W.I.A.S.), the range of values is very small, with only very minor perturbations affecting the station (fig. 5). There is a suggestion, however, of a double maximum at the time of the equinoxes associated with the semiannual variation in temperature and wind and related to the seasonal migration of the subtropical anticyclone as seen in the charts. At the subtropical station of White Sands, N. Mex. (fig. 4), a combination of the major annual variation and the semiannual variation is apparent. (This discussion prepared by Melvyn E. Gelman.)

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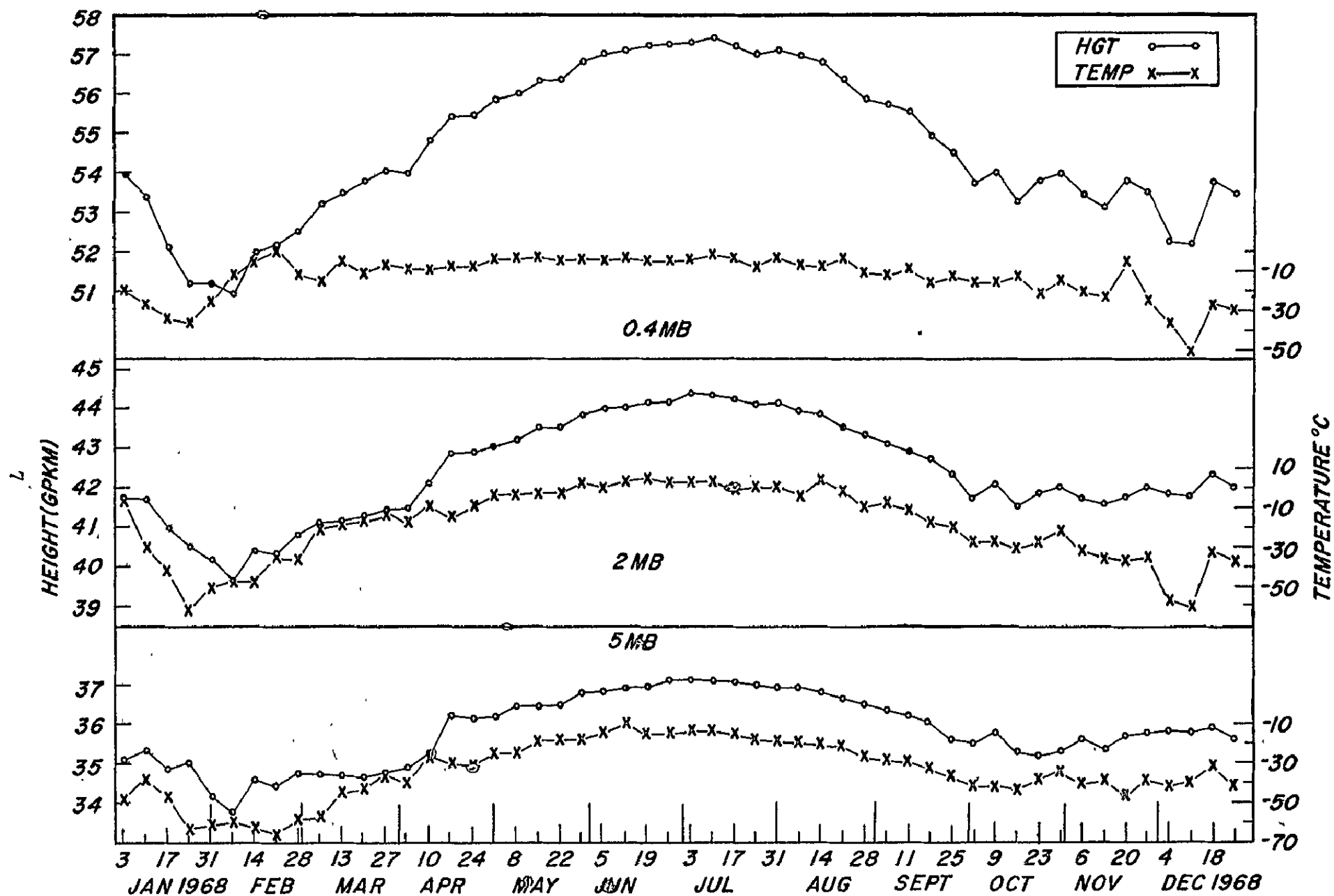


FIGURE 1.—Fort Greely, Alaska (64°00'N., 145°44'W.), analyzed values extracted from weekly 5-, 2-, and 0.4-mb charts.

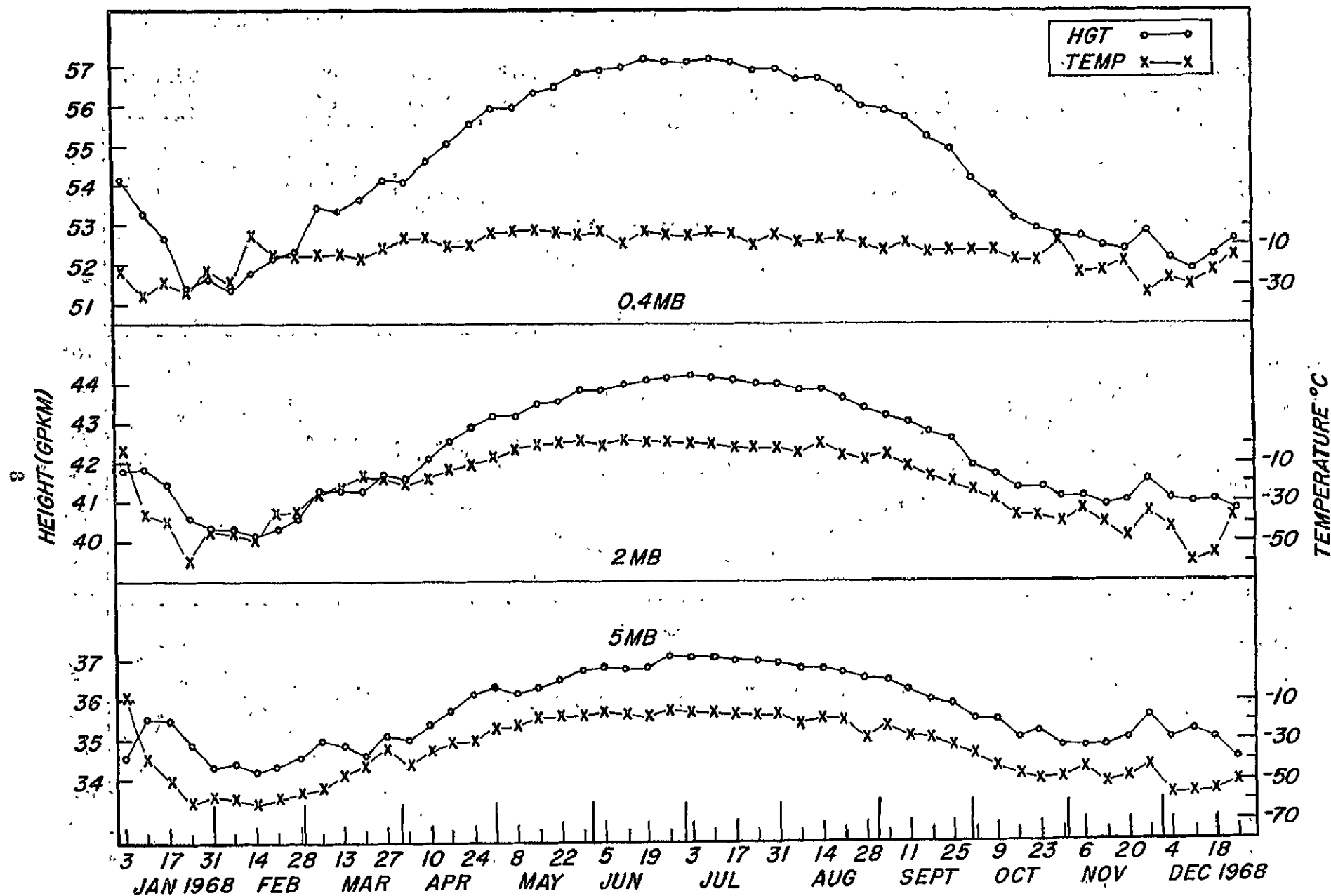


FIGURE 2.—Fort Churchill, Canada (58°44'N., 93°49'W.), analyzed values extracted from weekly 5-, 2-, and 0.4-mb charts.

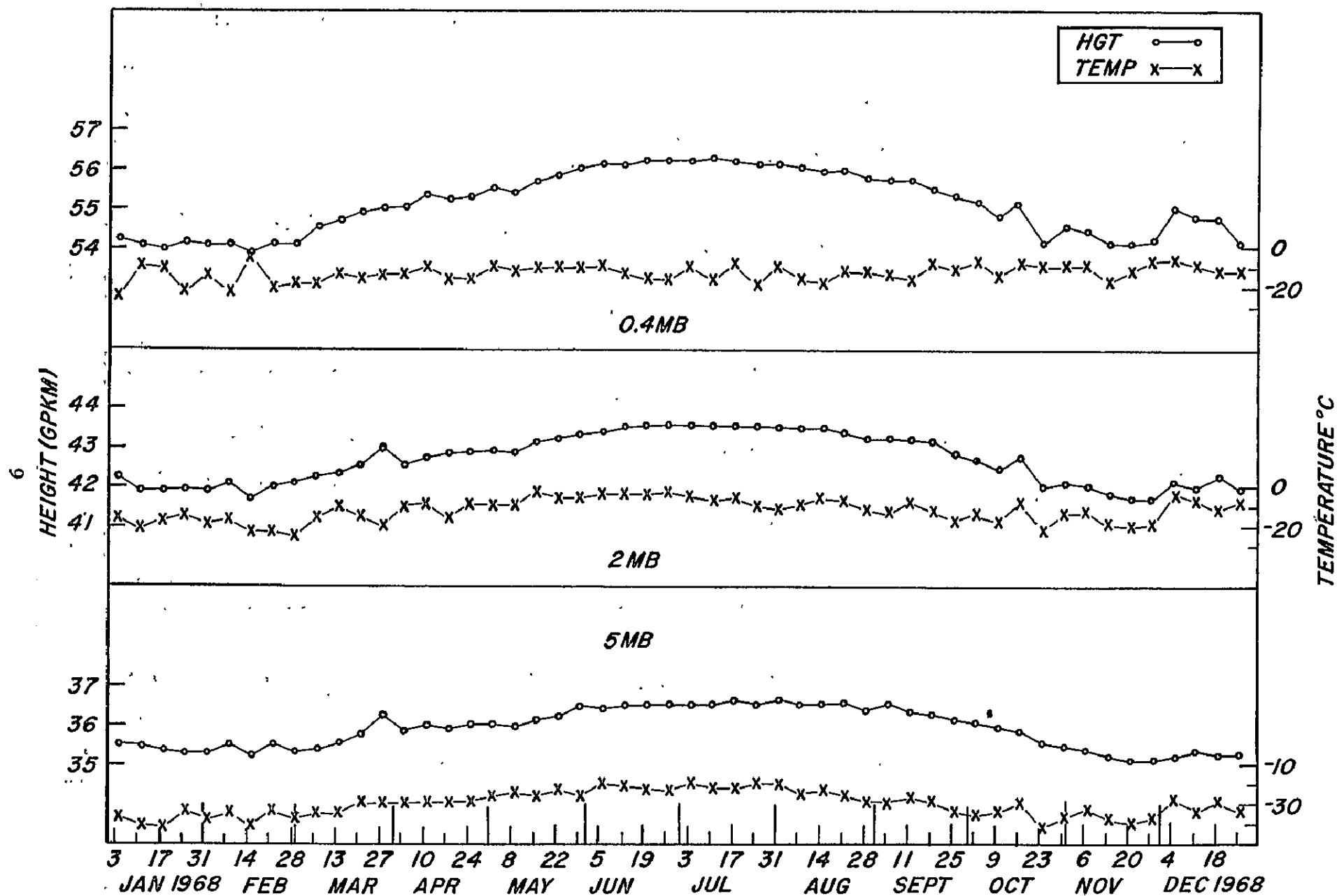


FIGURE 3.—Wallops Island, Va. (37°50'N., 75°29'W.), analyzed values extracted from weekly 5-, 2-, and 0.4-mb charts.

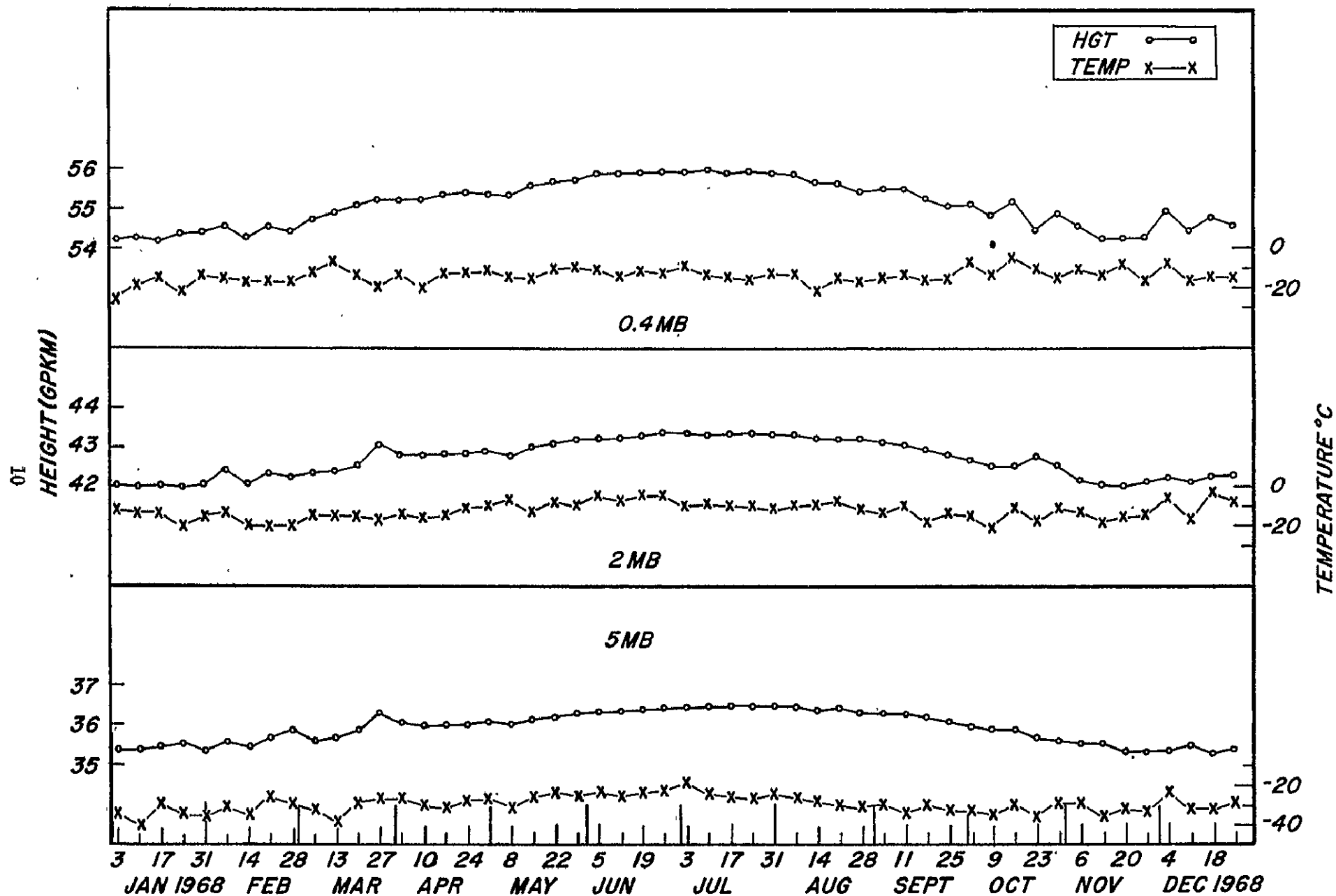


FIGURE 4.—White Sands, N. Mex. (32°23'N., 106°29'W.), analyzed values extracted from weekly 5-, 2-, and 0.4-mb charts.

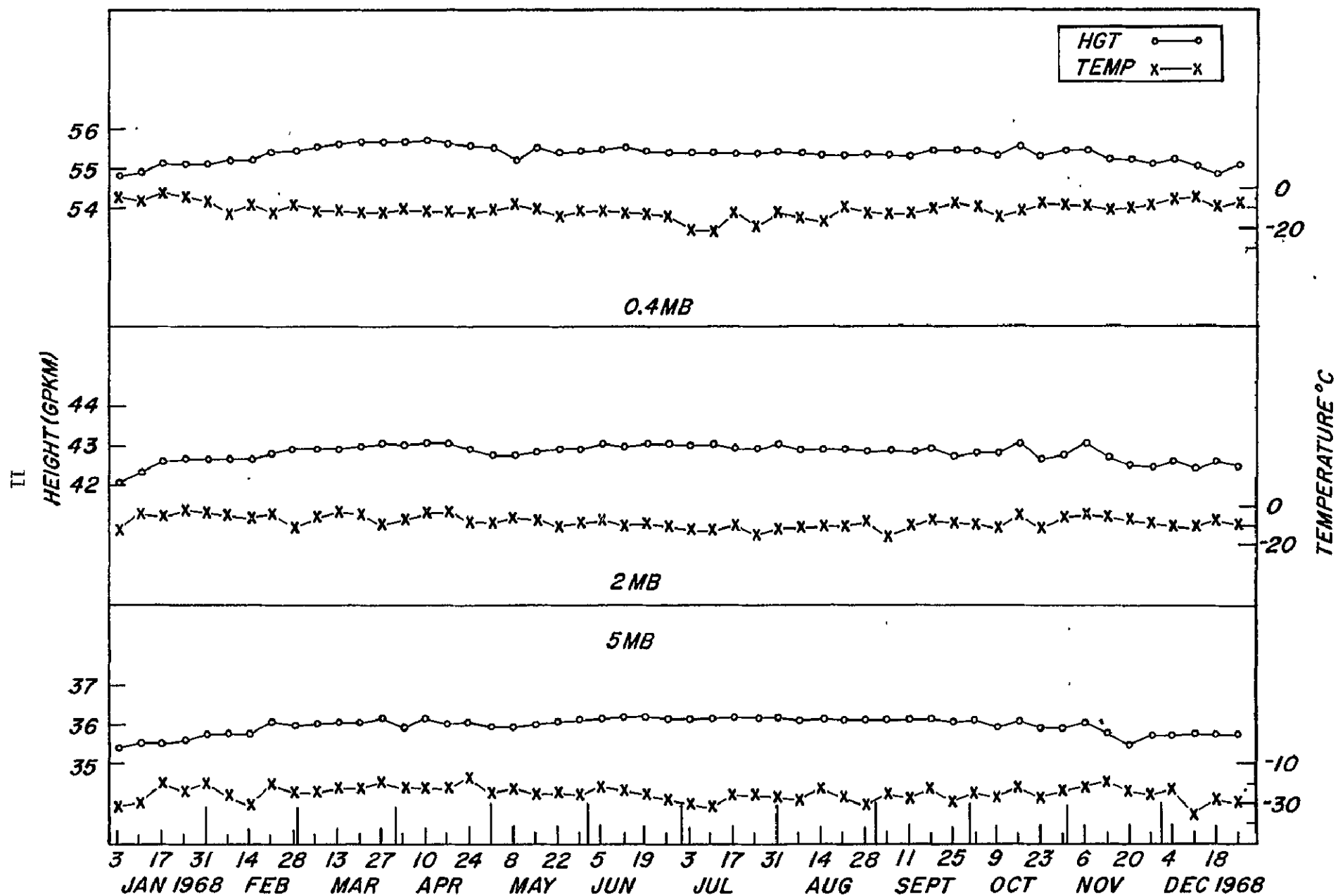
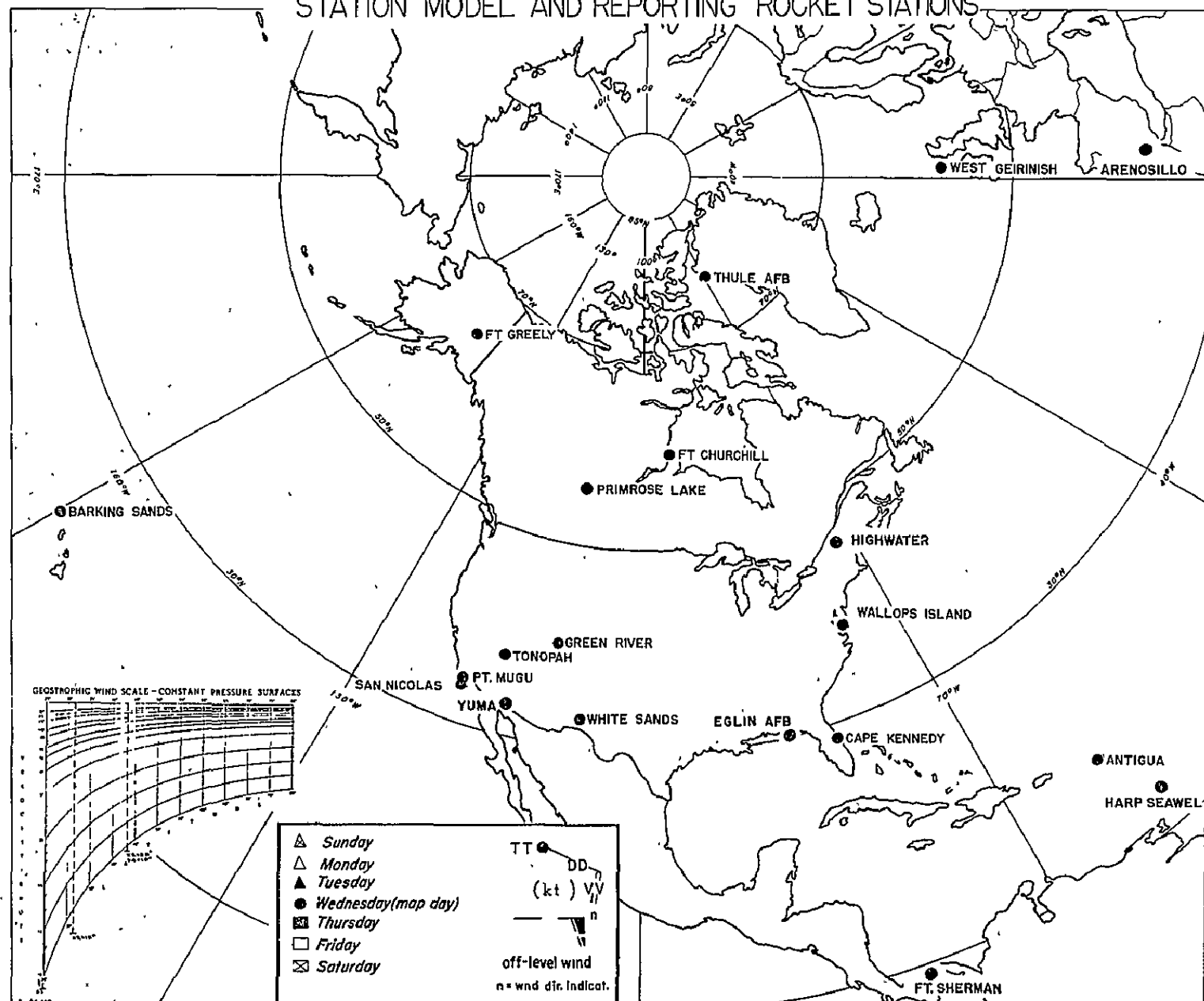
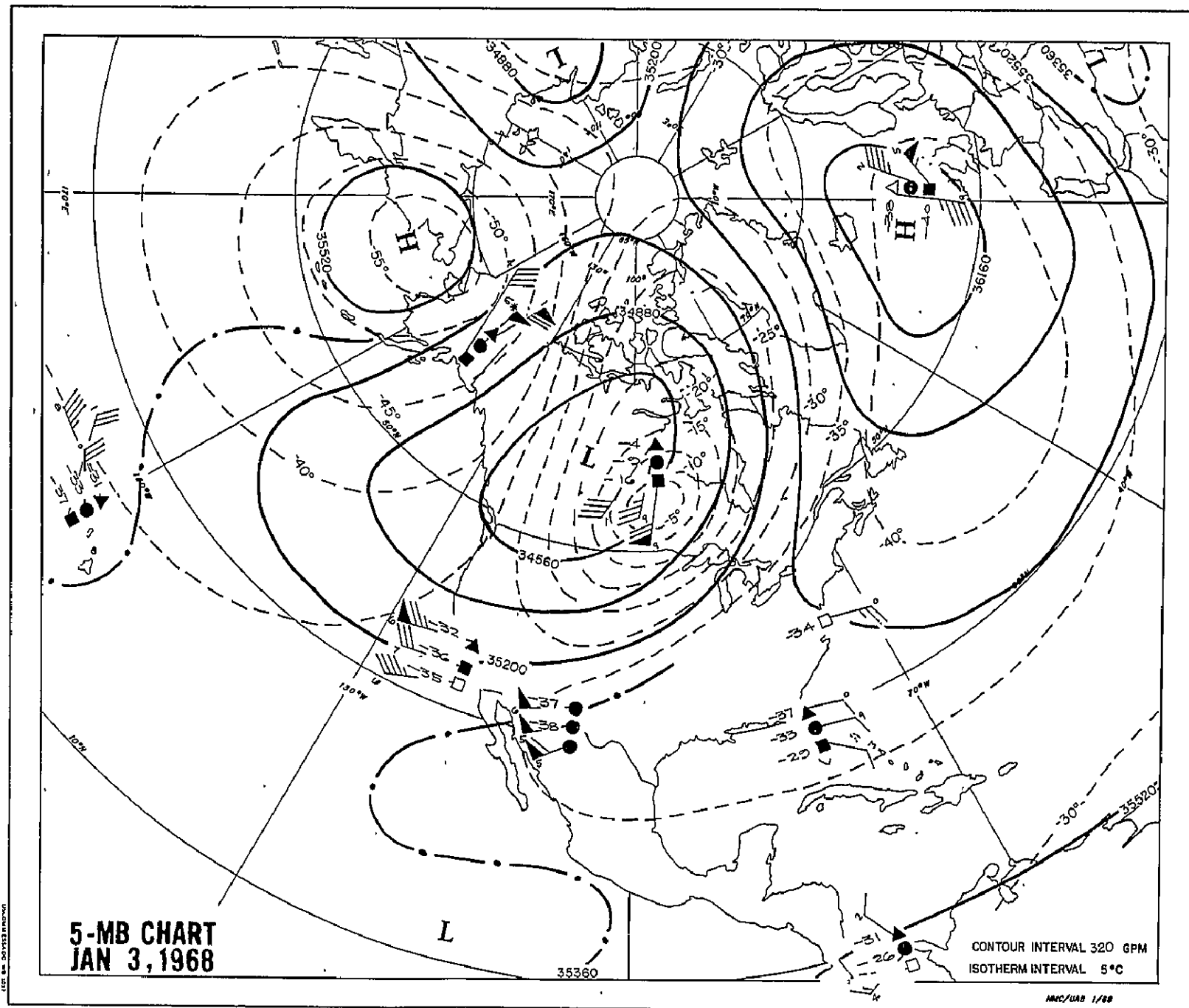


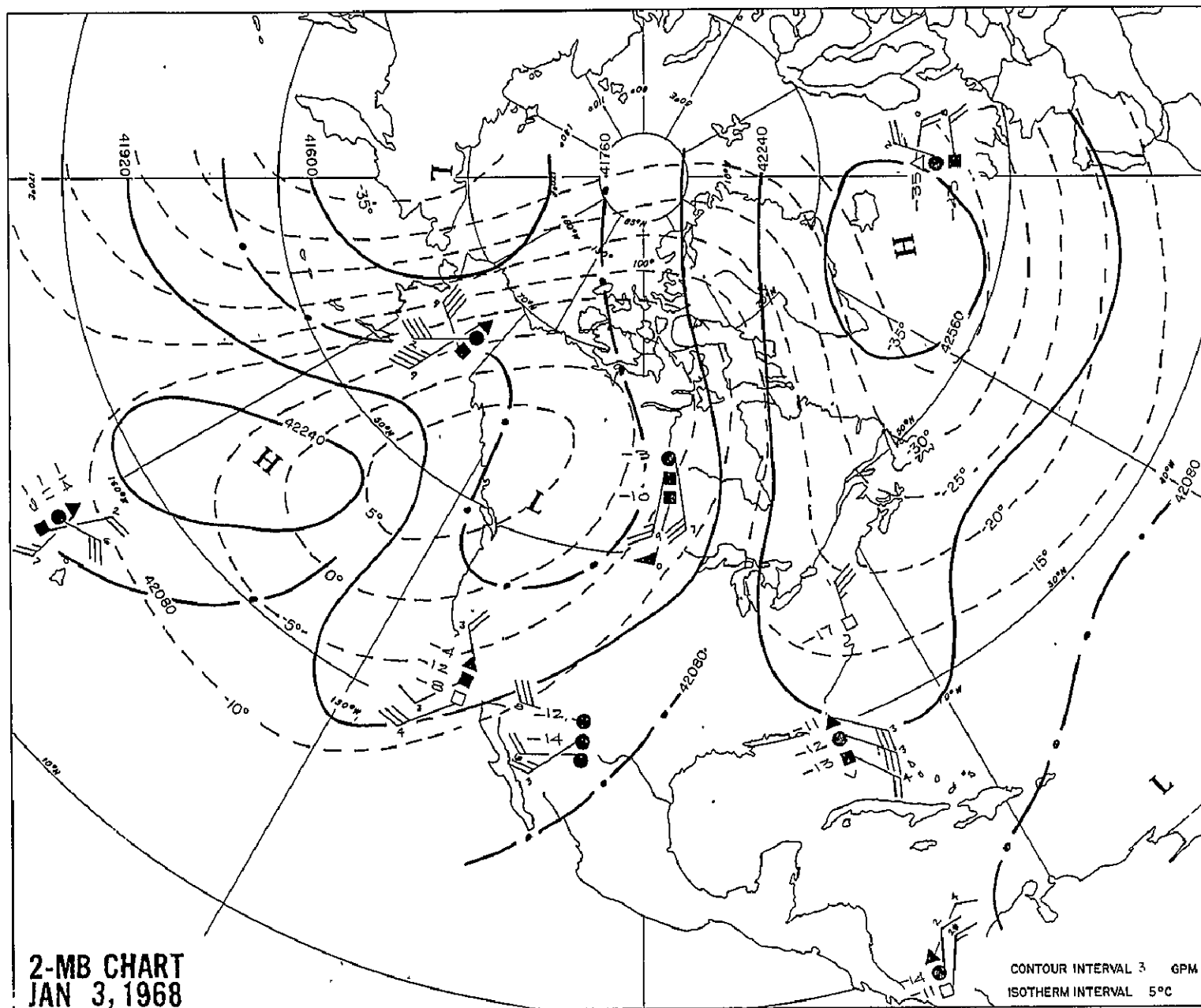
FIGURE 5.—Antigua, W.I.A.S. ( $17^{\circ}09'N$ ,  $61^{\circ}47'W$ .), analyzed values extracted from weekly 5-, 2-, and 0.4-mb charts.

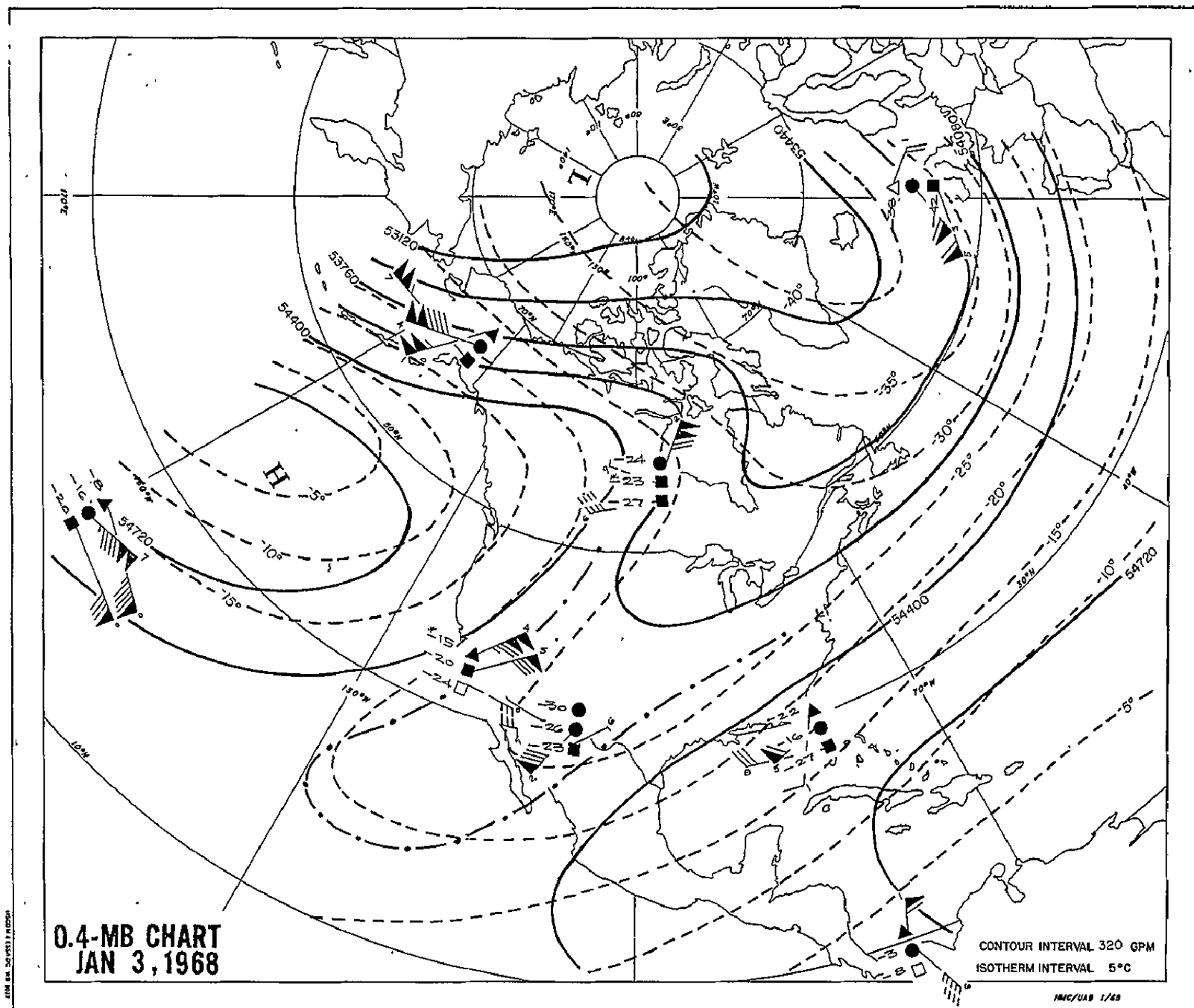


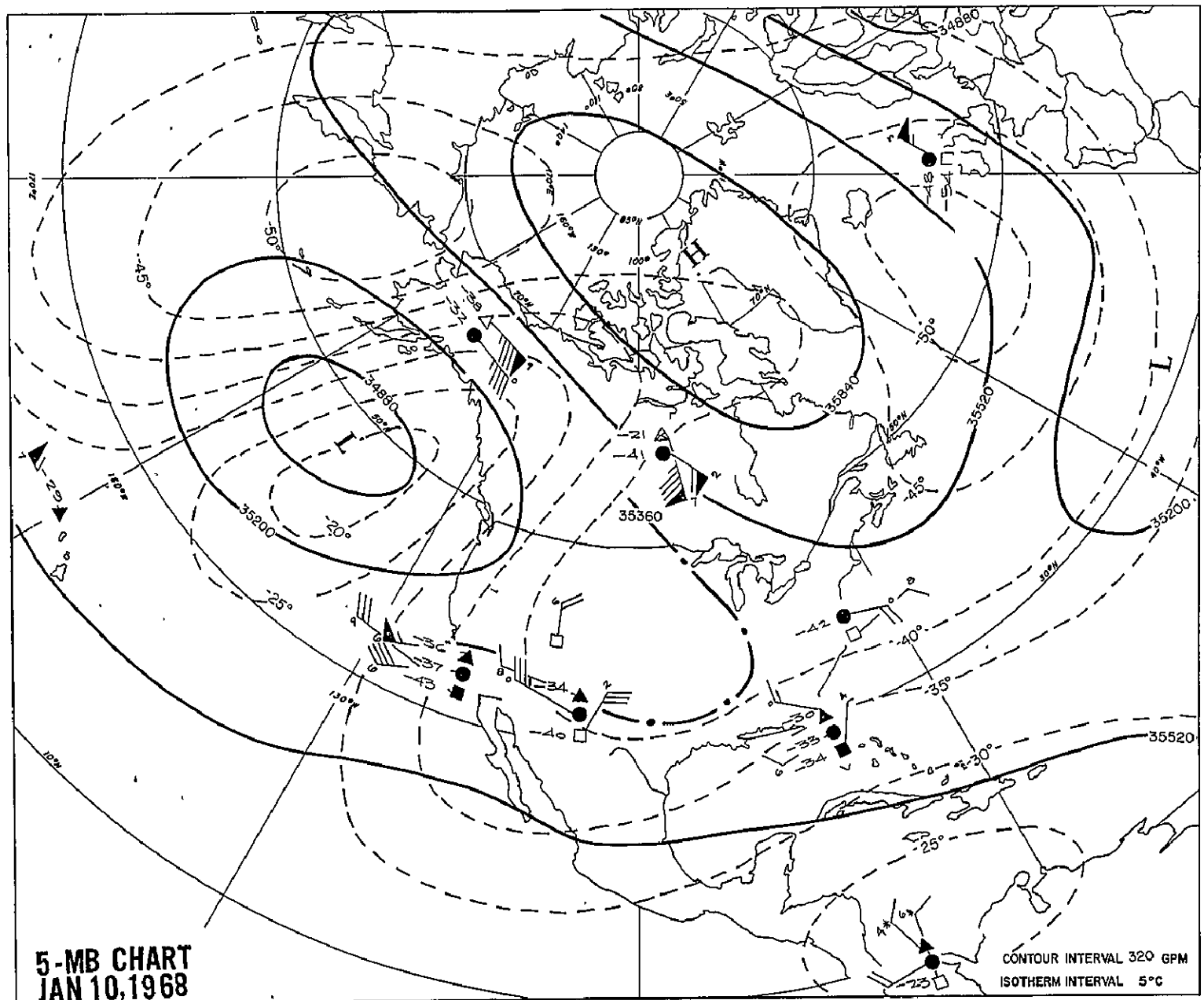
# STATION MODEL AND REPORTING ROCKET STATIONS

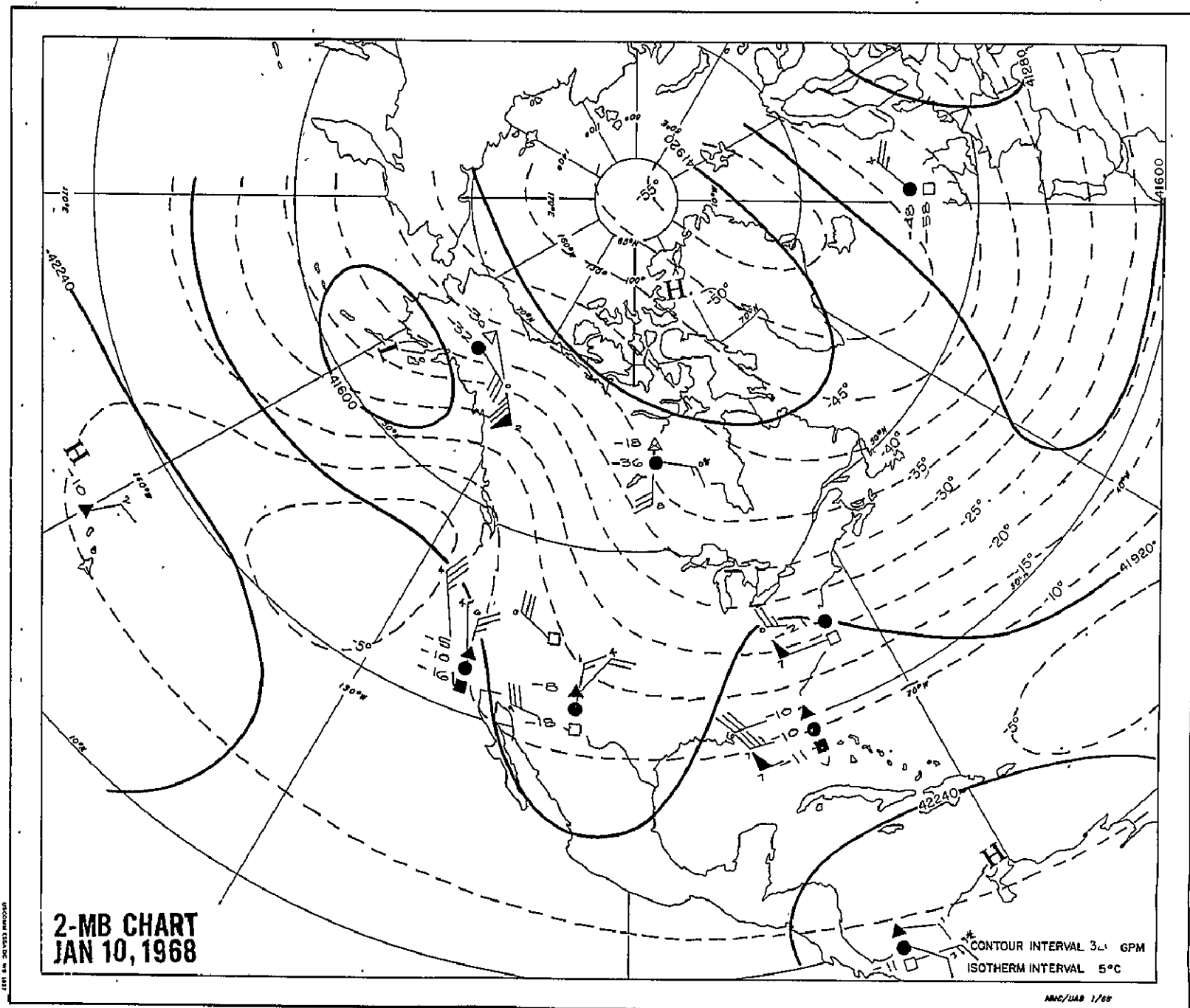


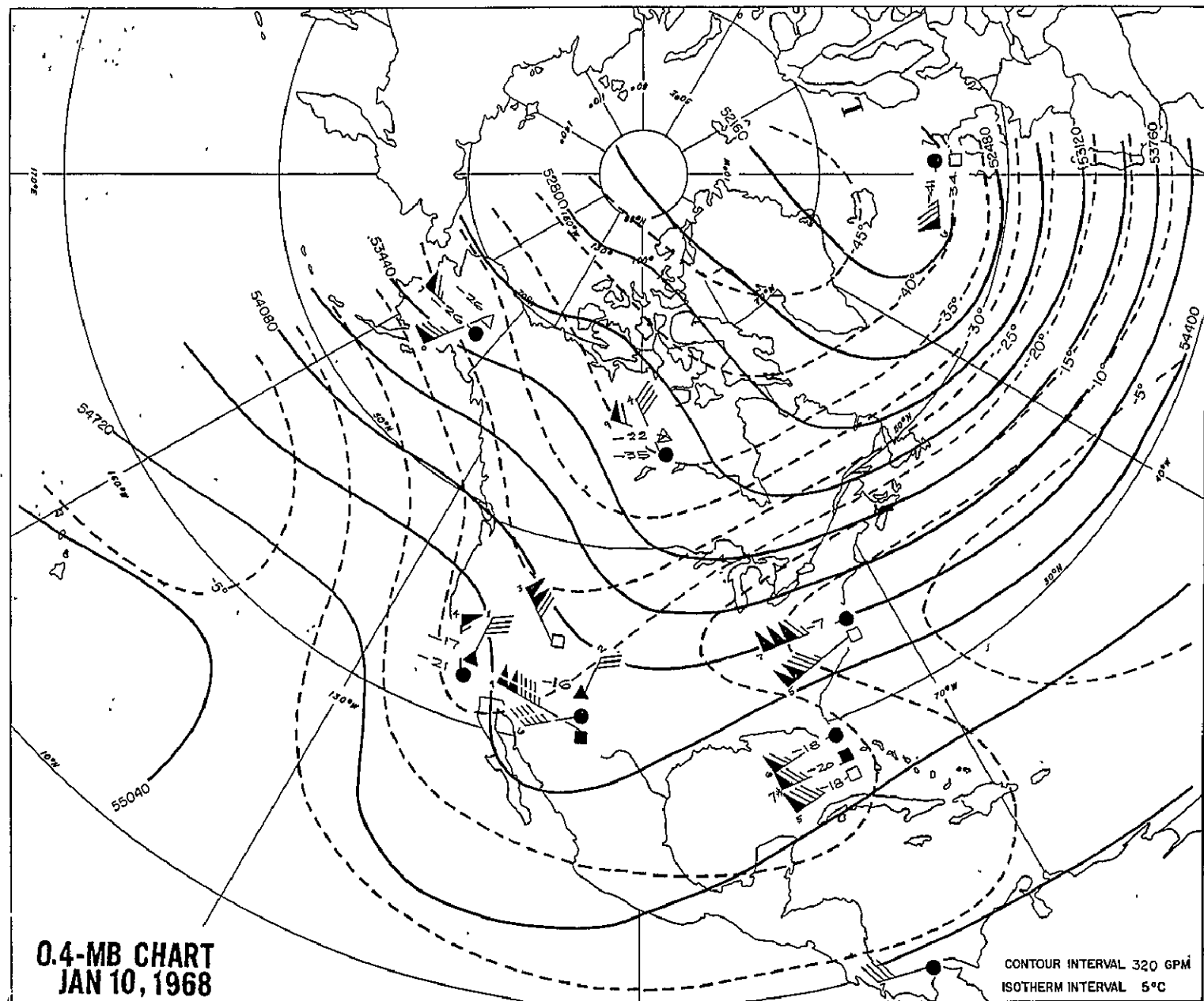








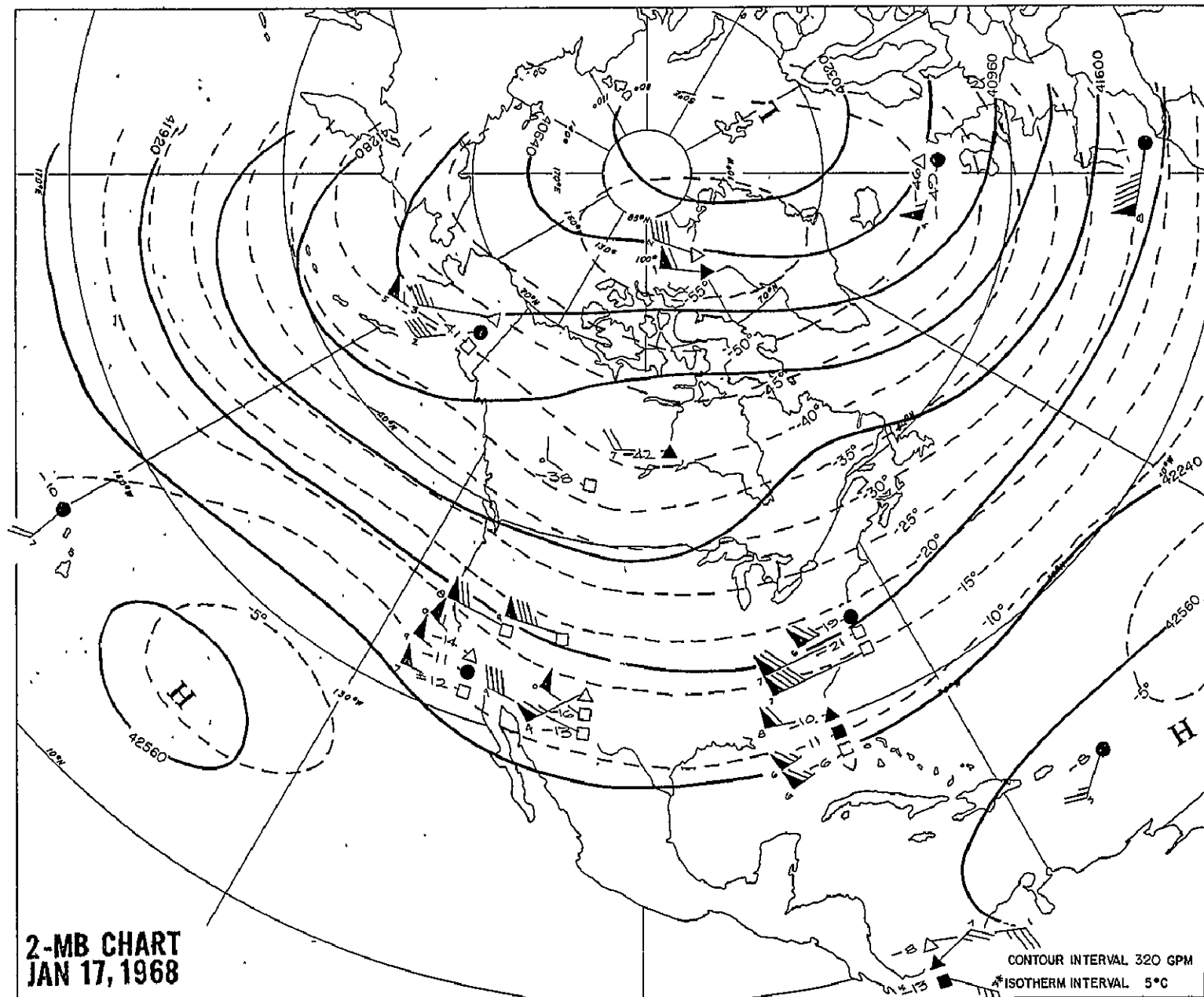


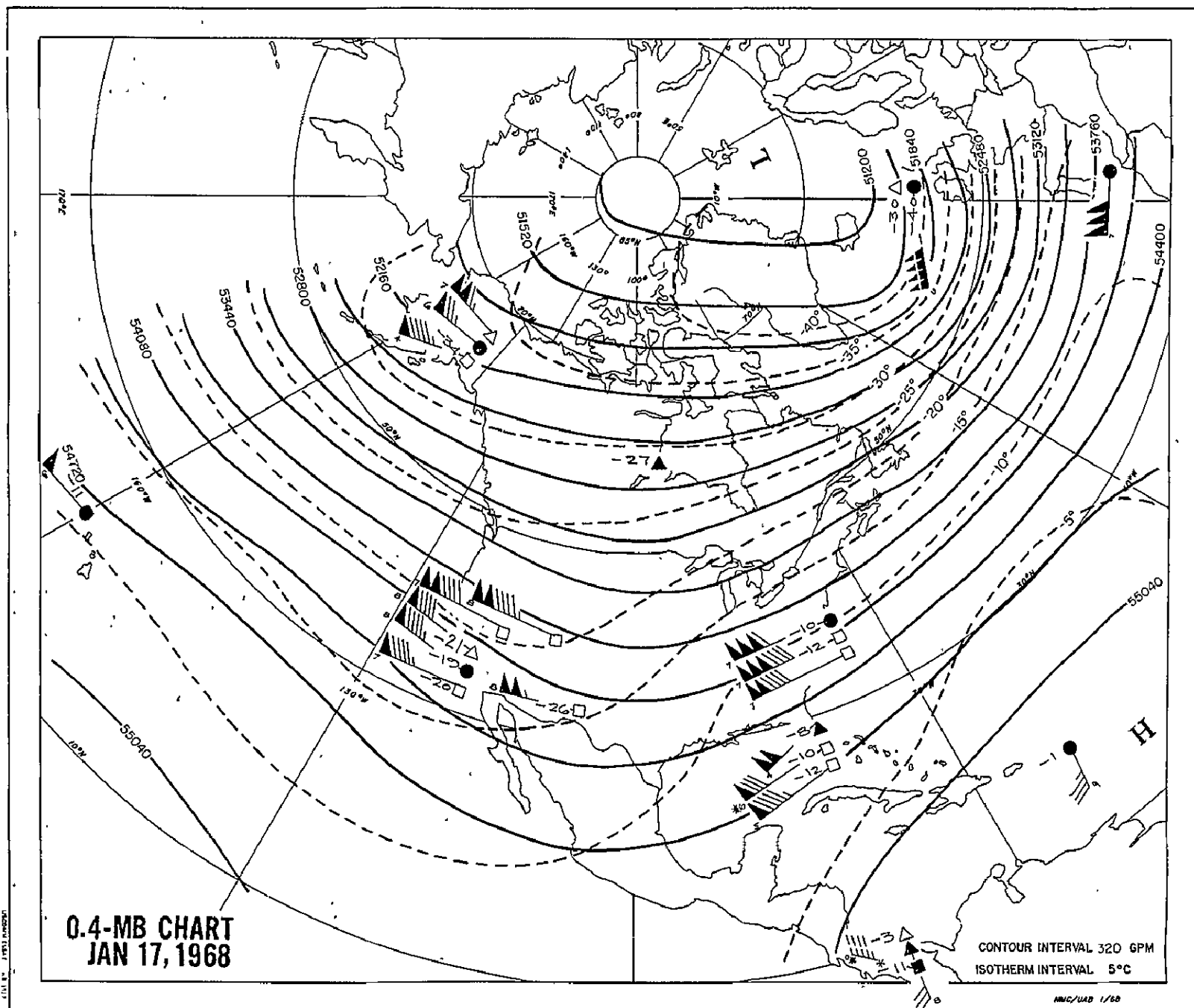


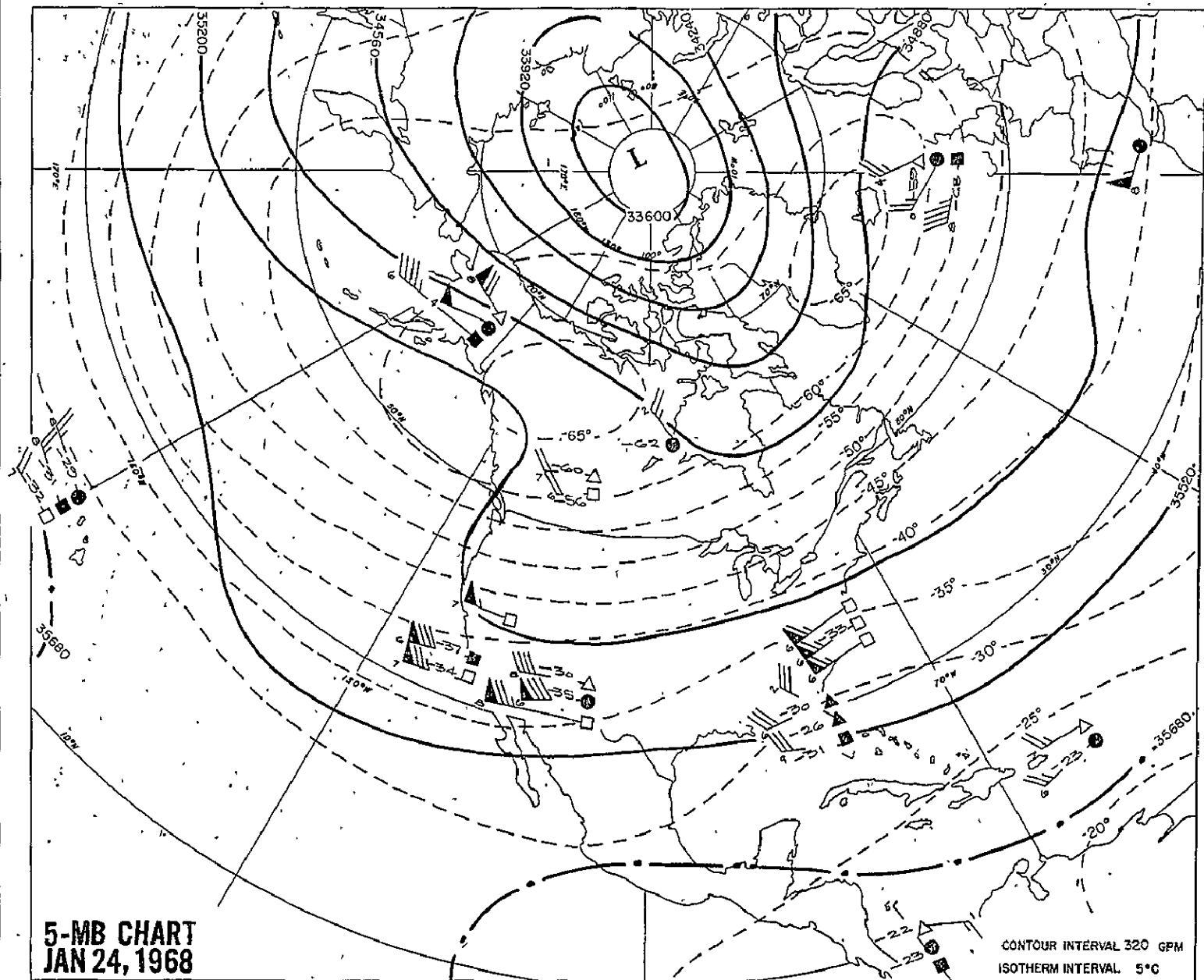
NOAA/USAR 1/68









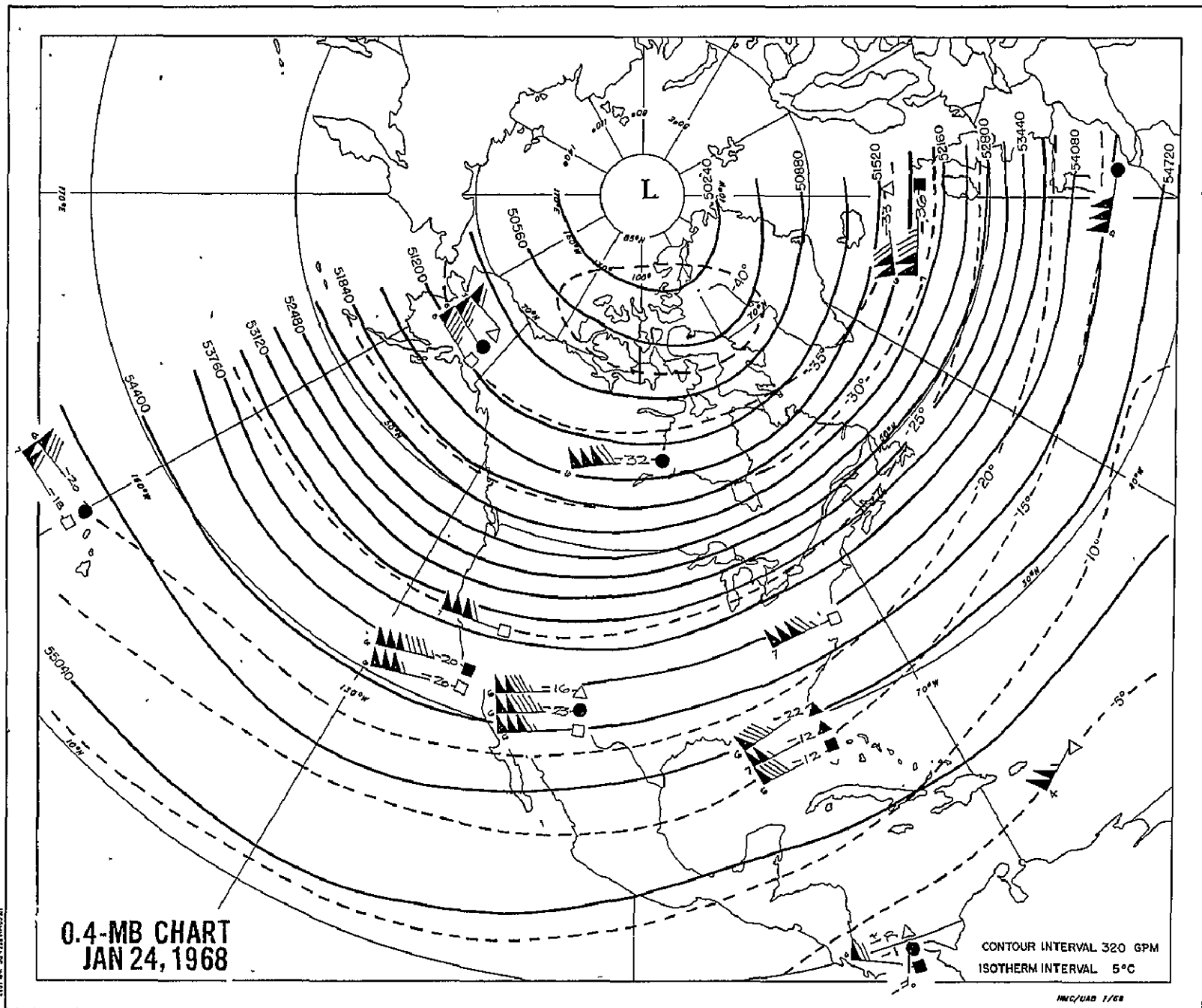


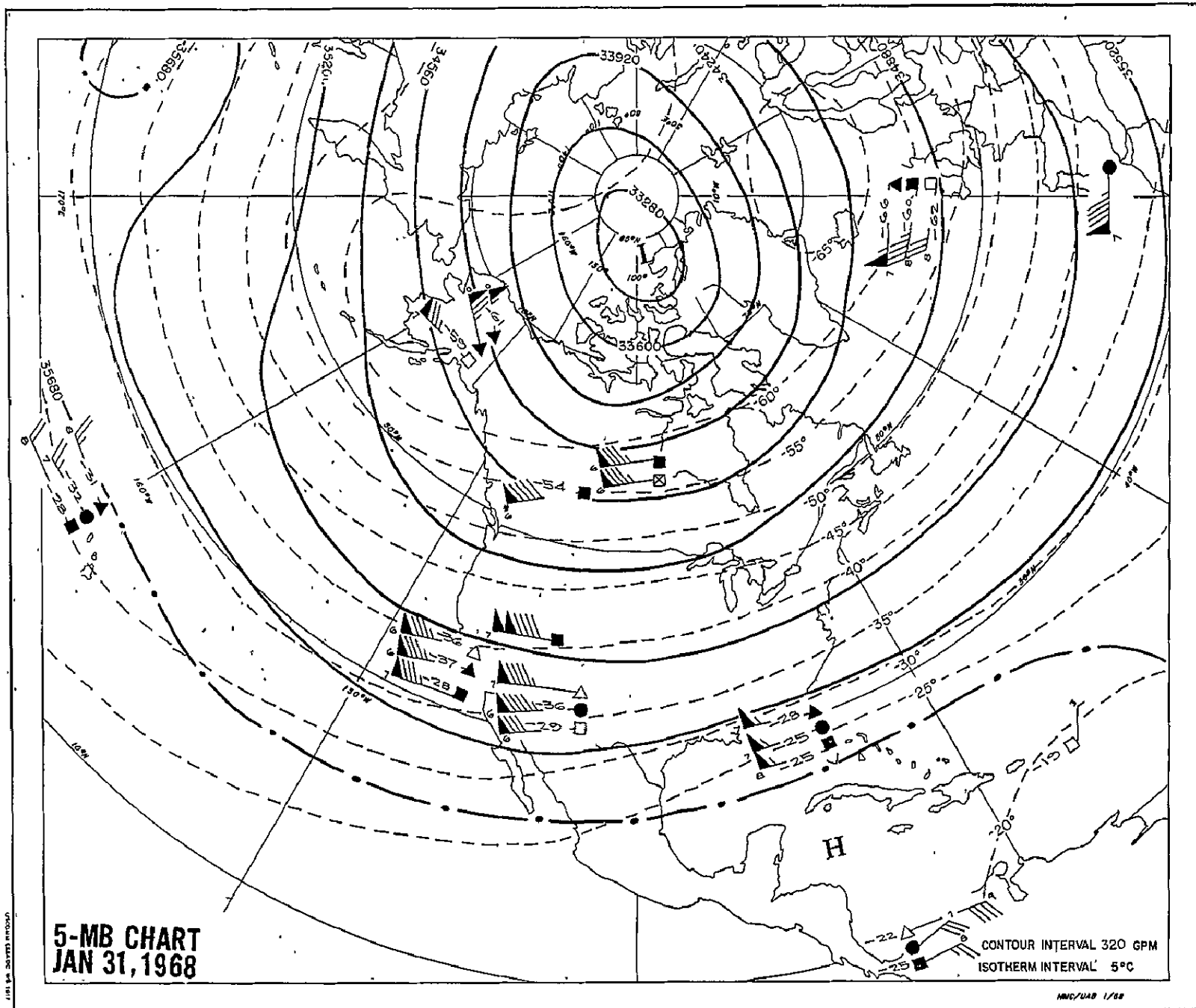
5-MB CHART  
JAN 24, 1968

CONTOUR INTERVAL 320 GPM  
ISOTHERM INTERVAL 5°C

MMG/UMS 1/68



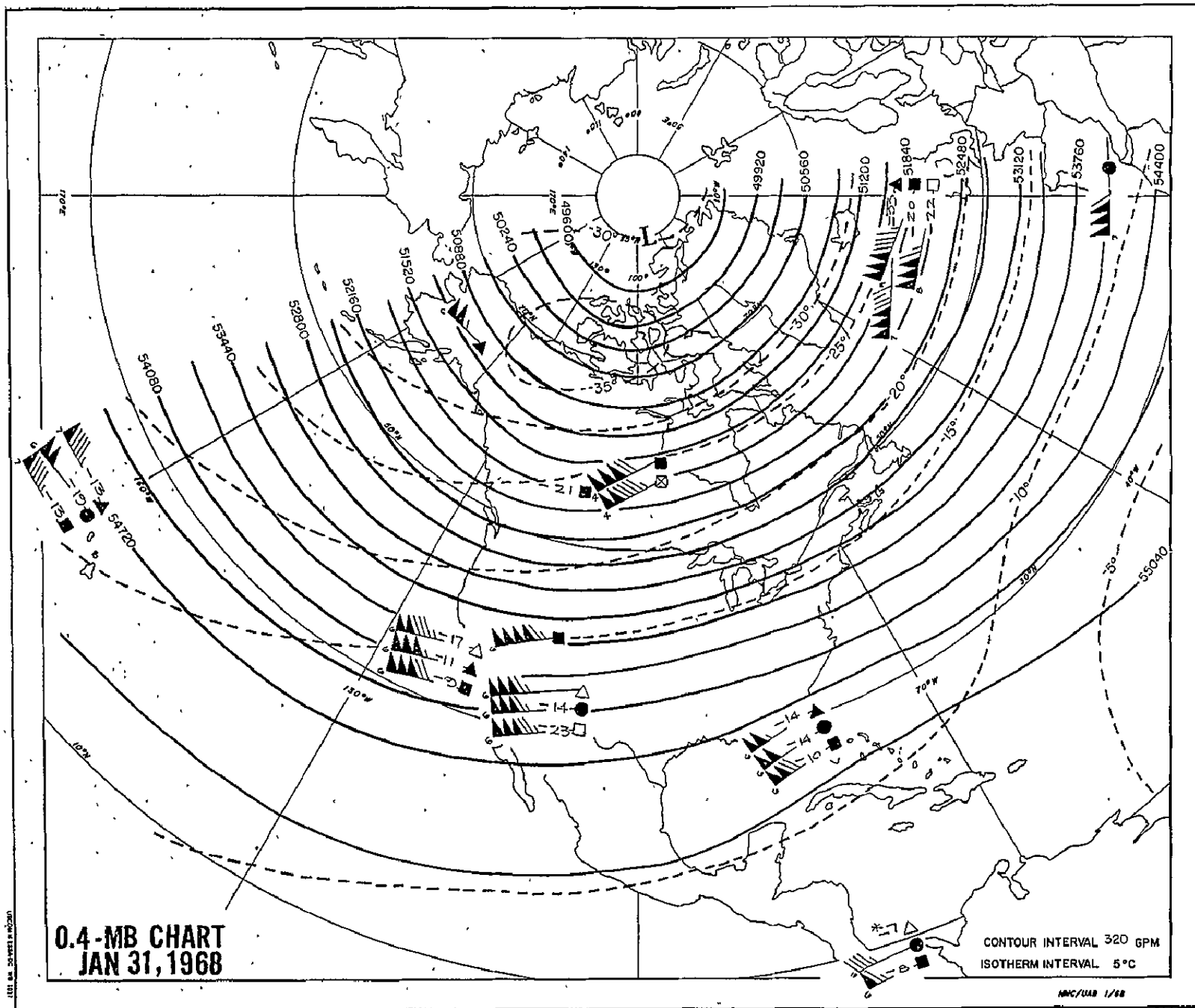




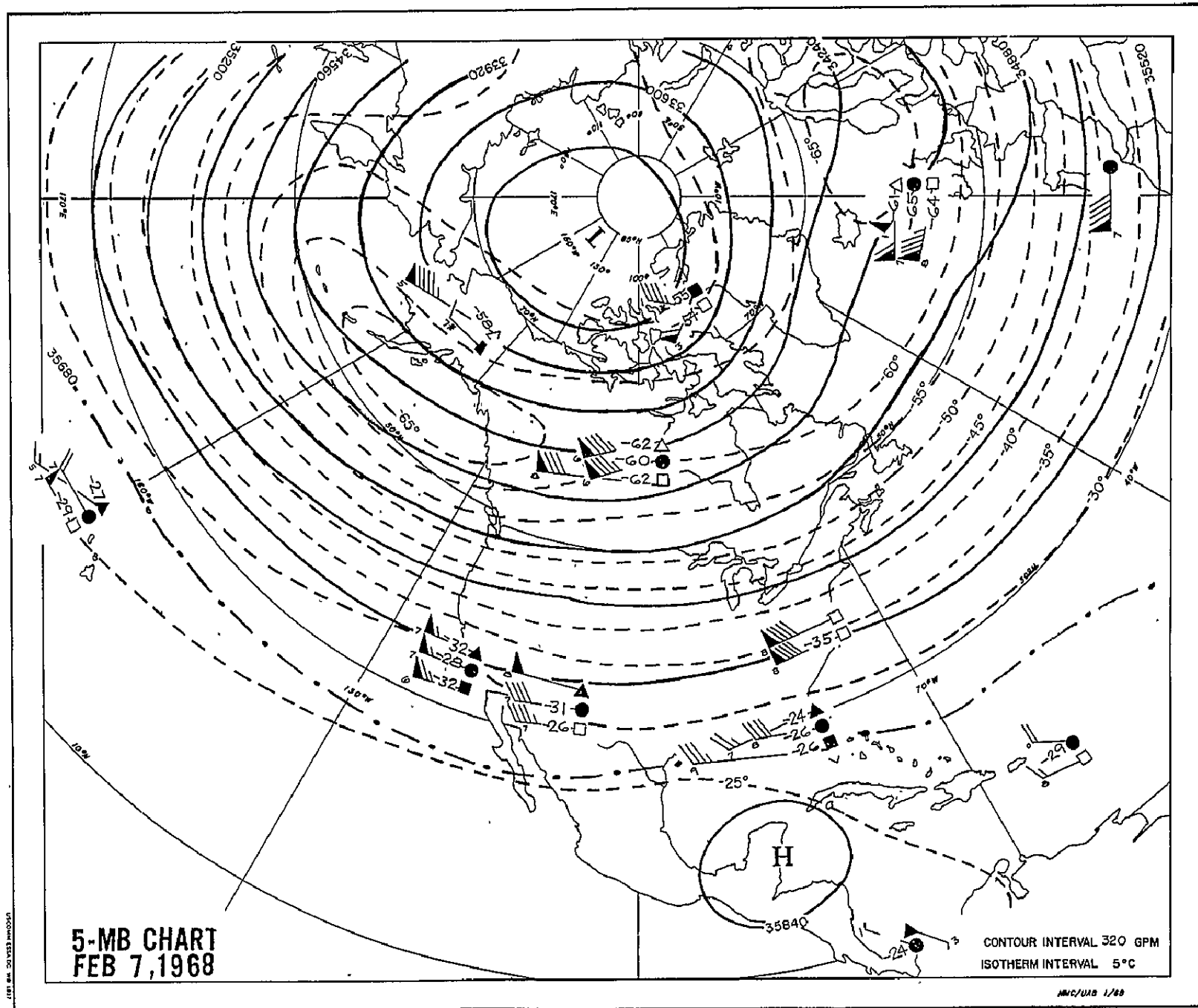
**2-MB CHART  
JAN 31, 1968**

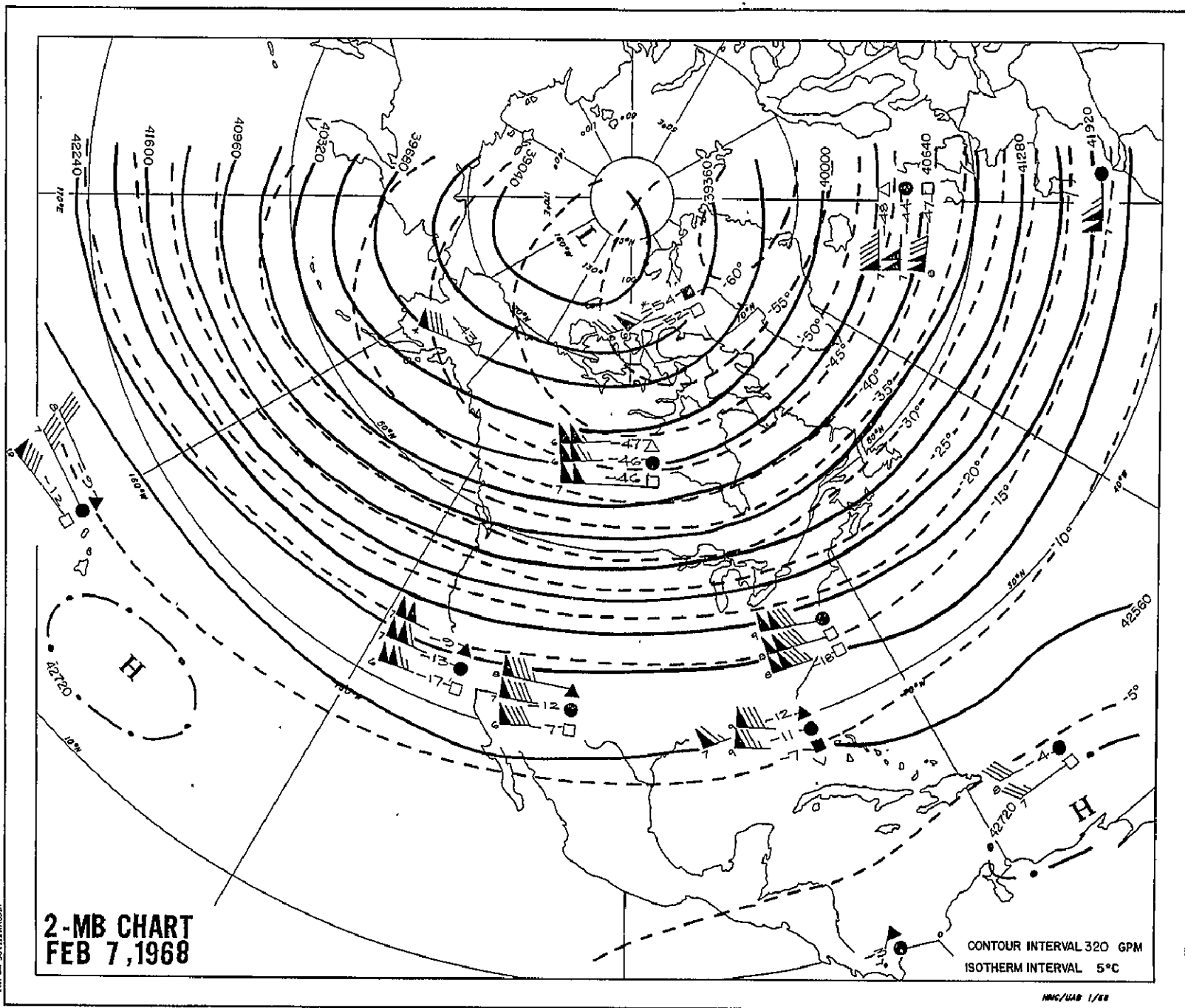
CONTOUR INTERVAL 320 GPM  
ISOTHERM INTERVAL 5°C

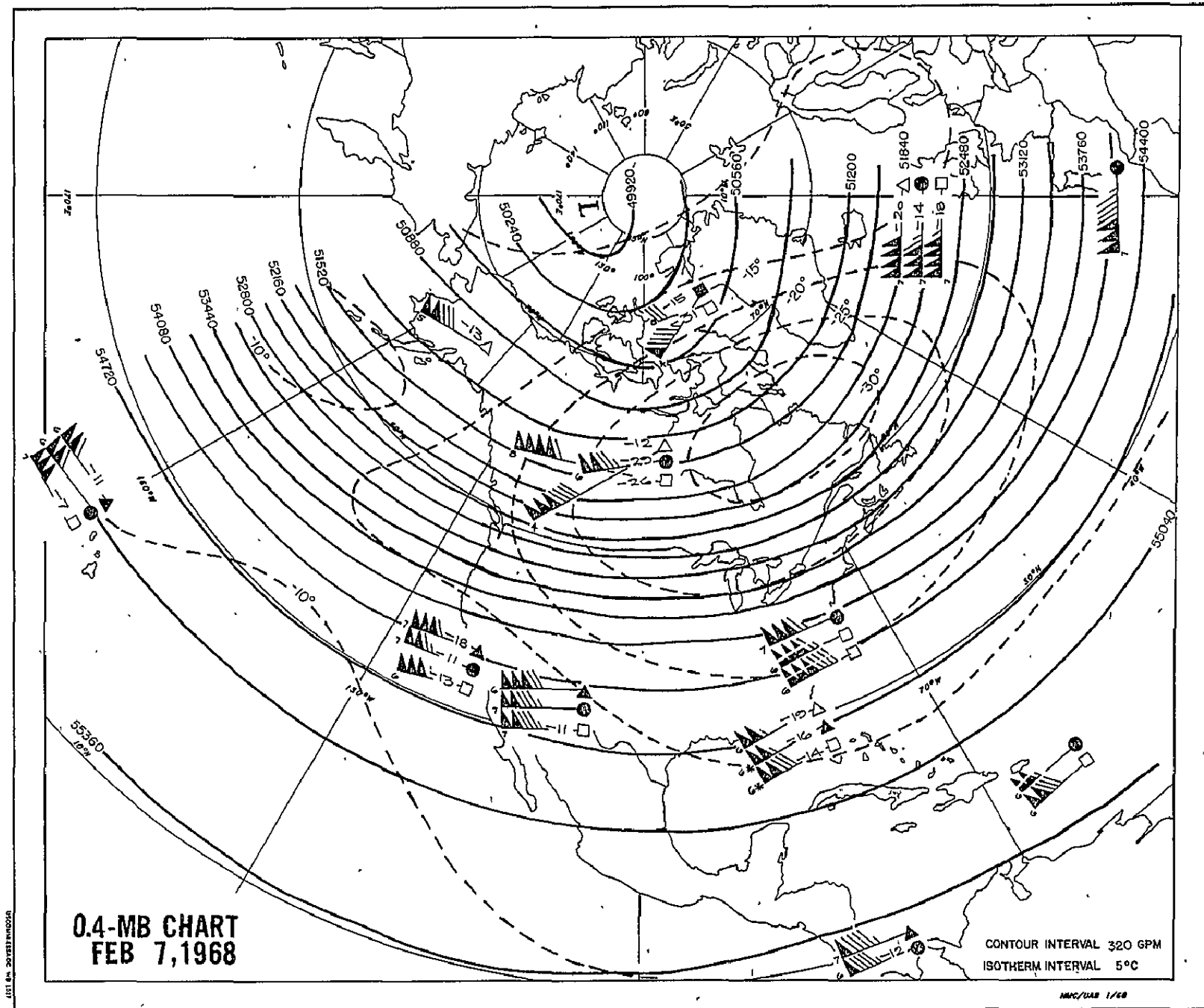
NMC/USAF 1/68

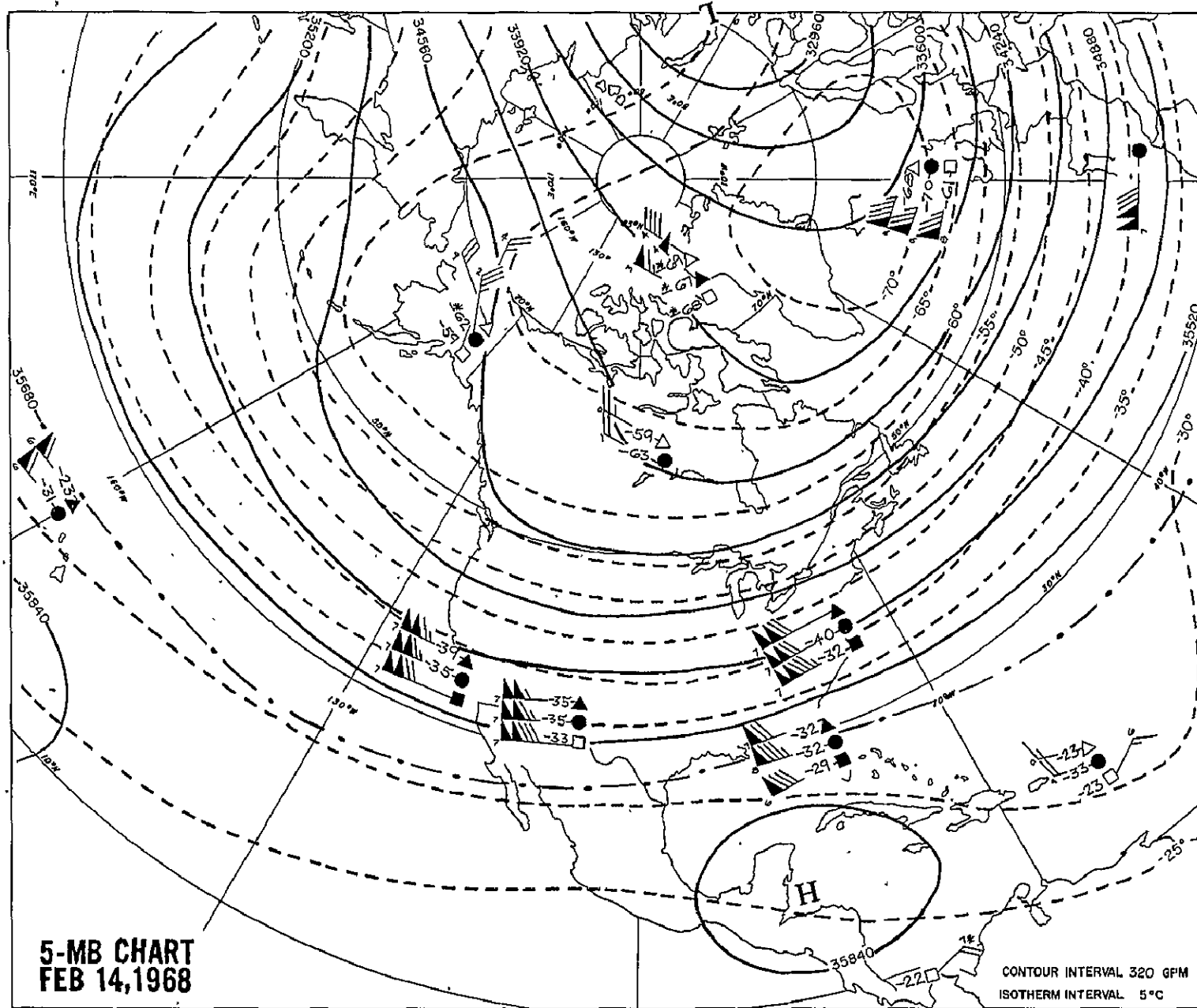


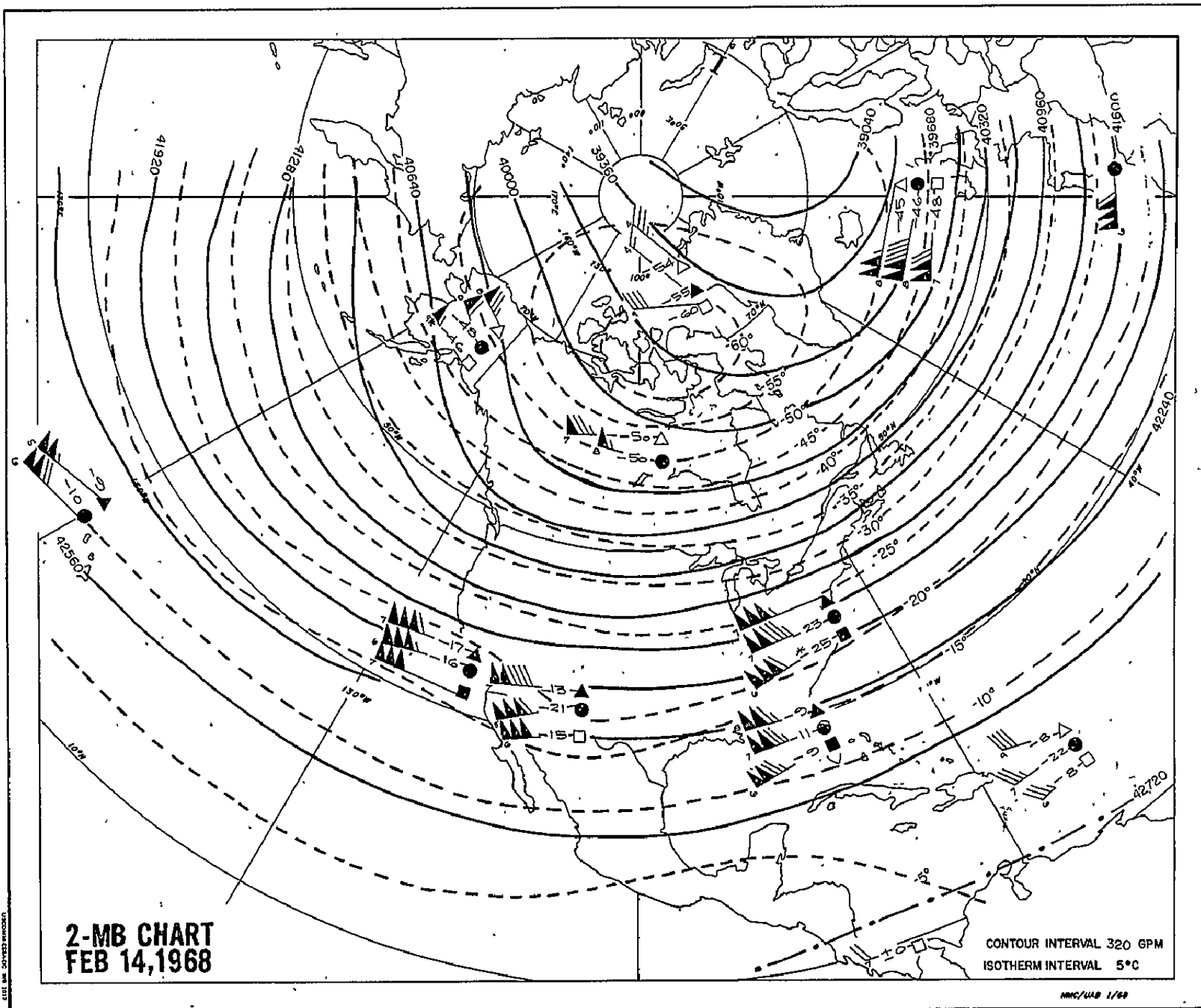


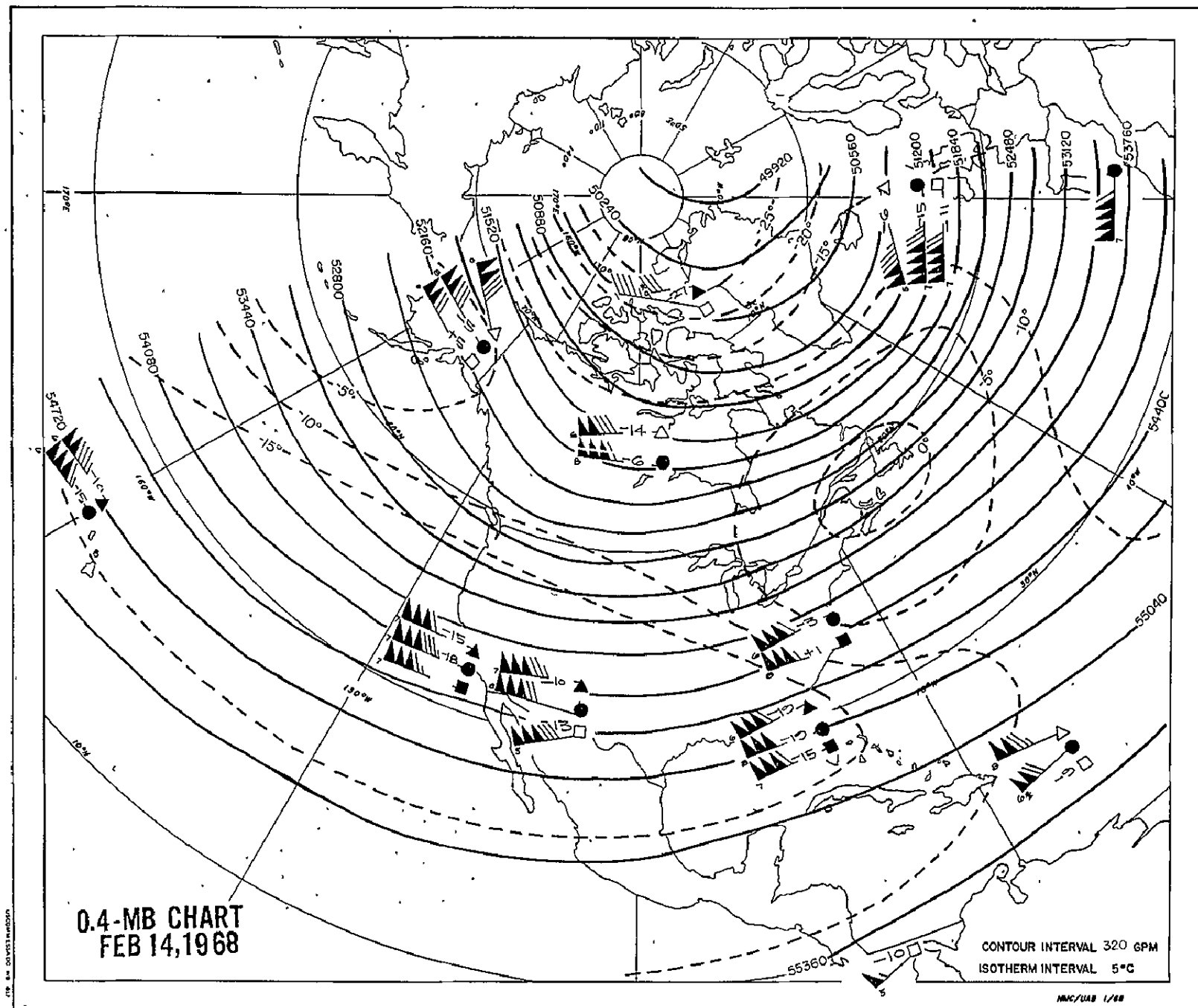


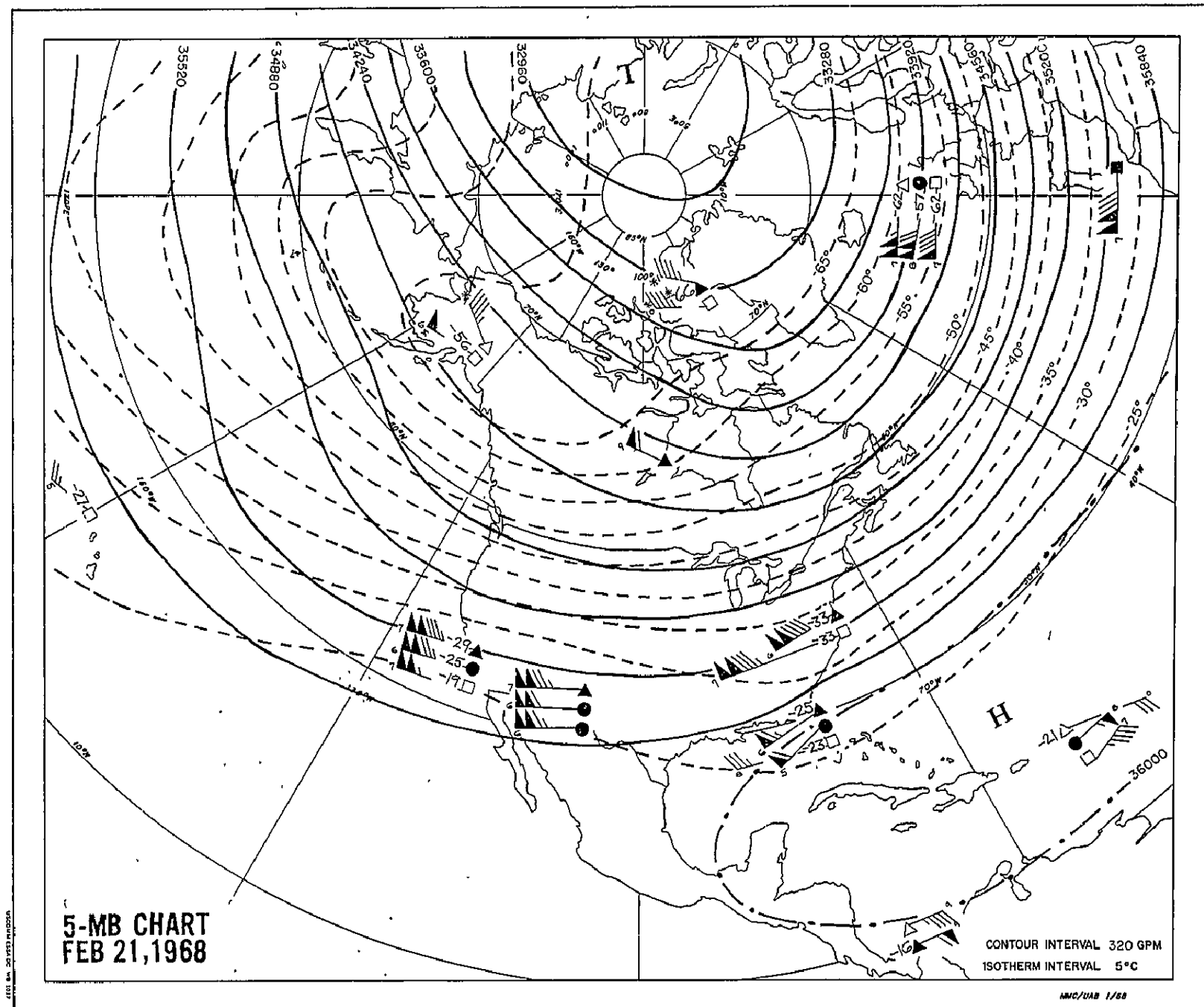


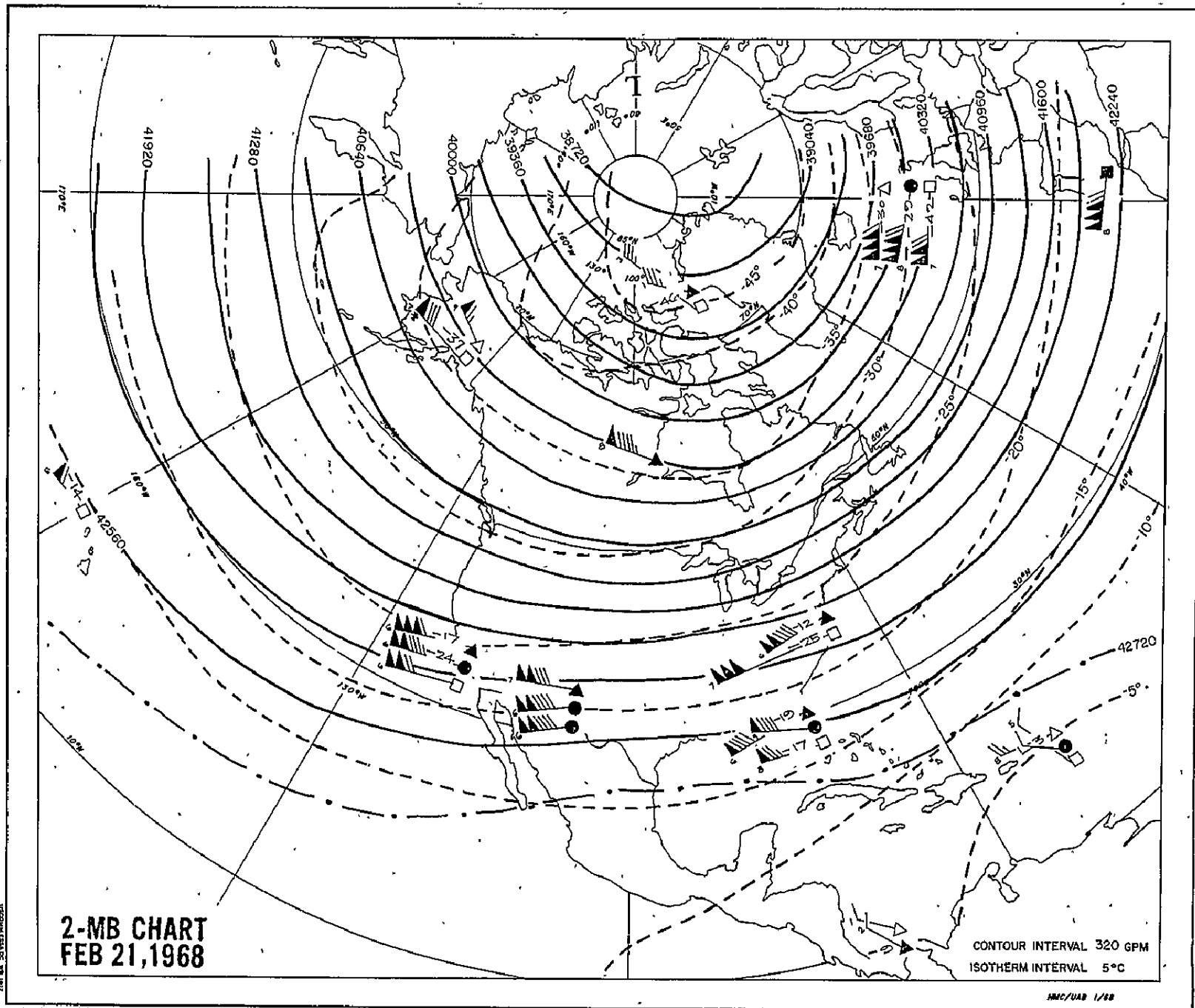




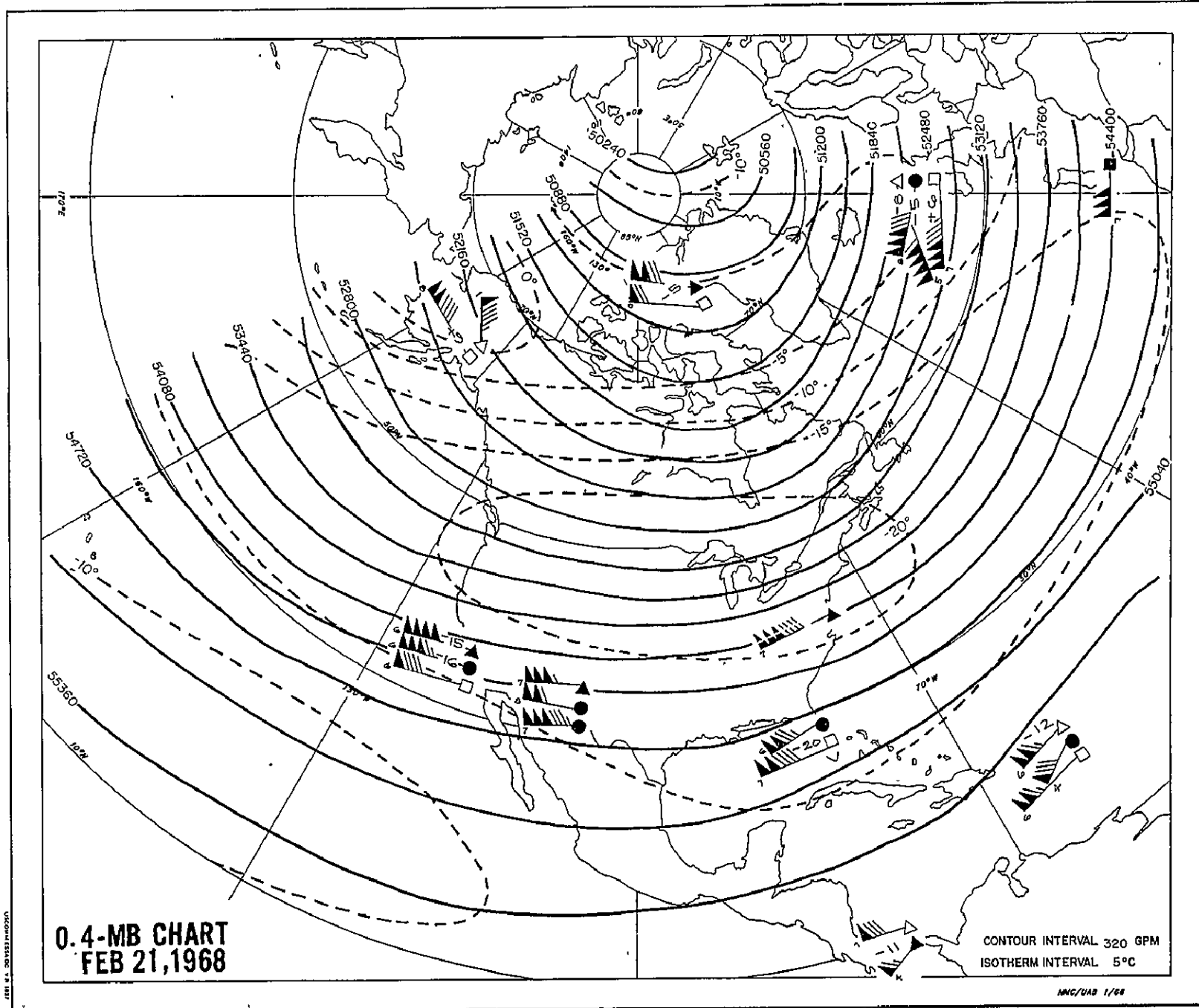






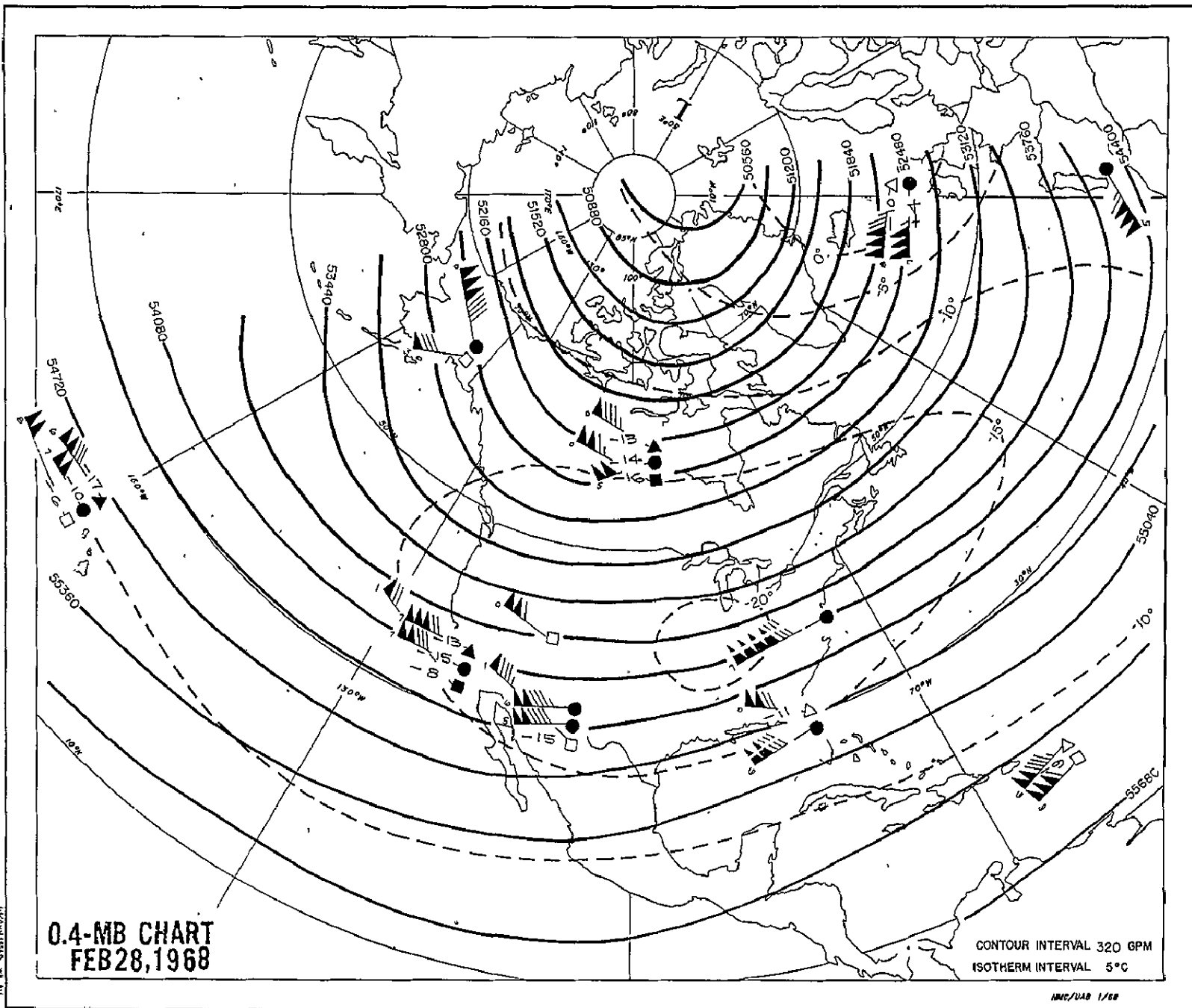


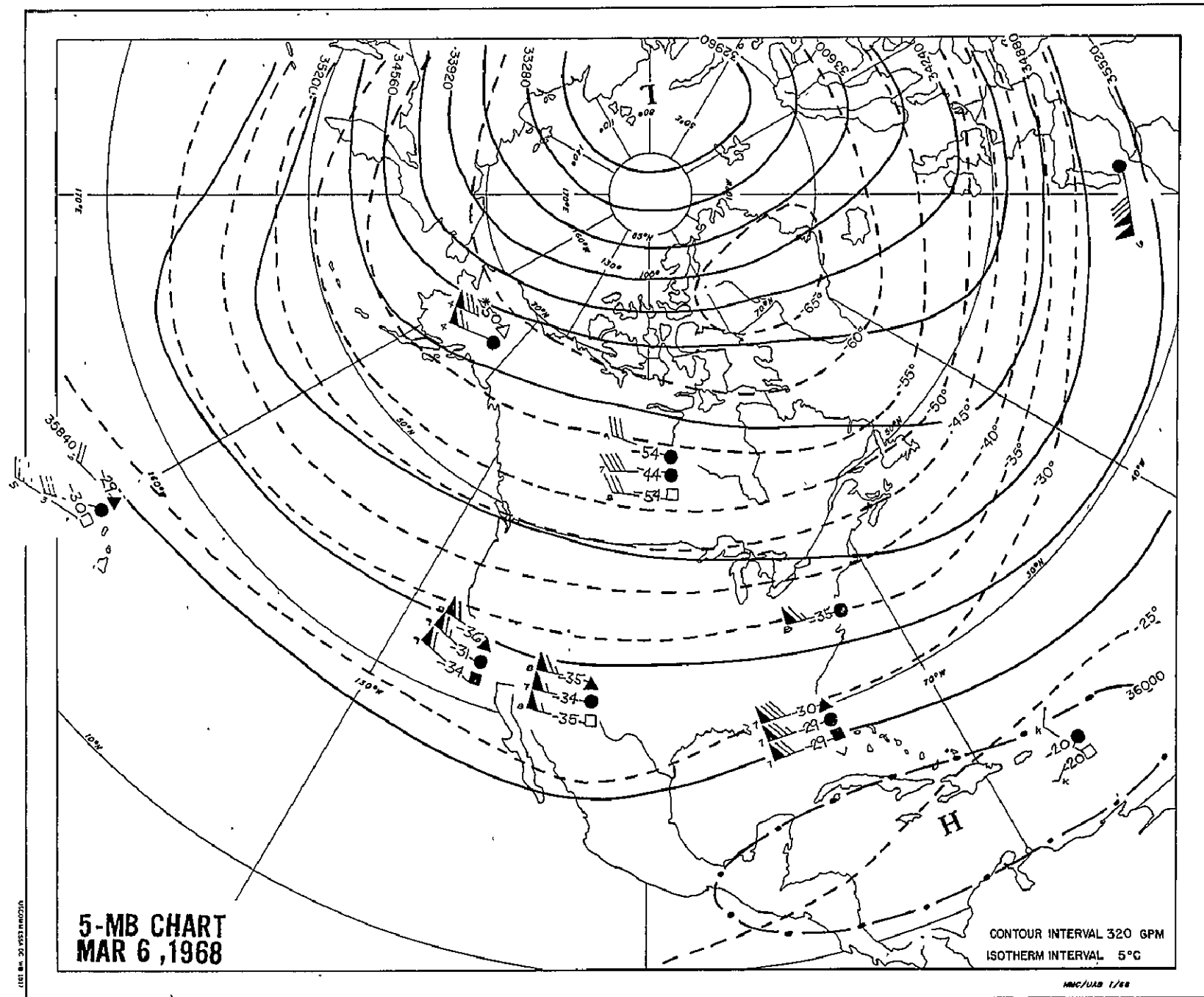


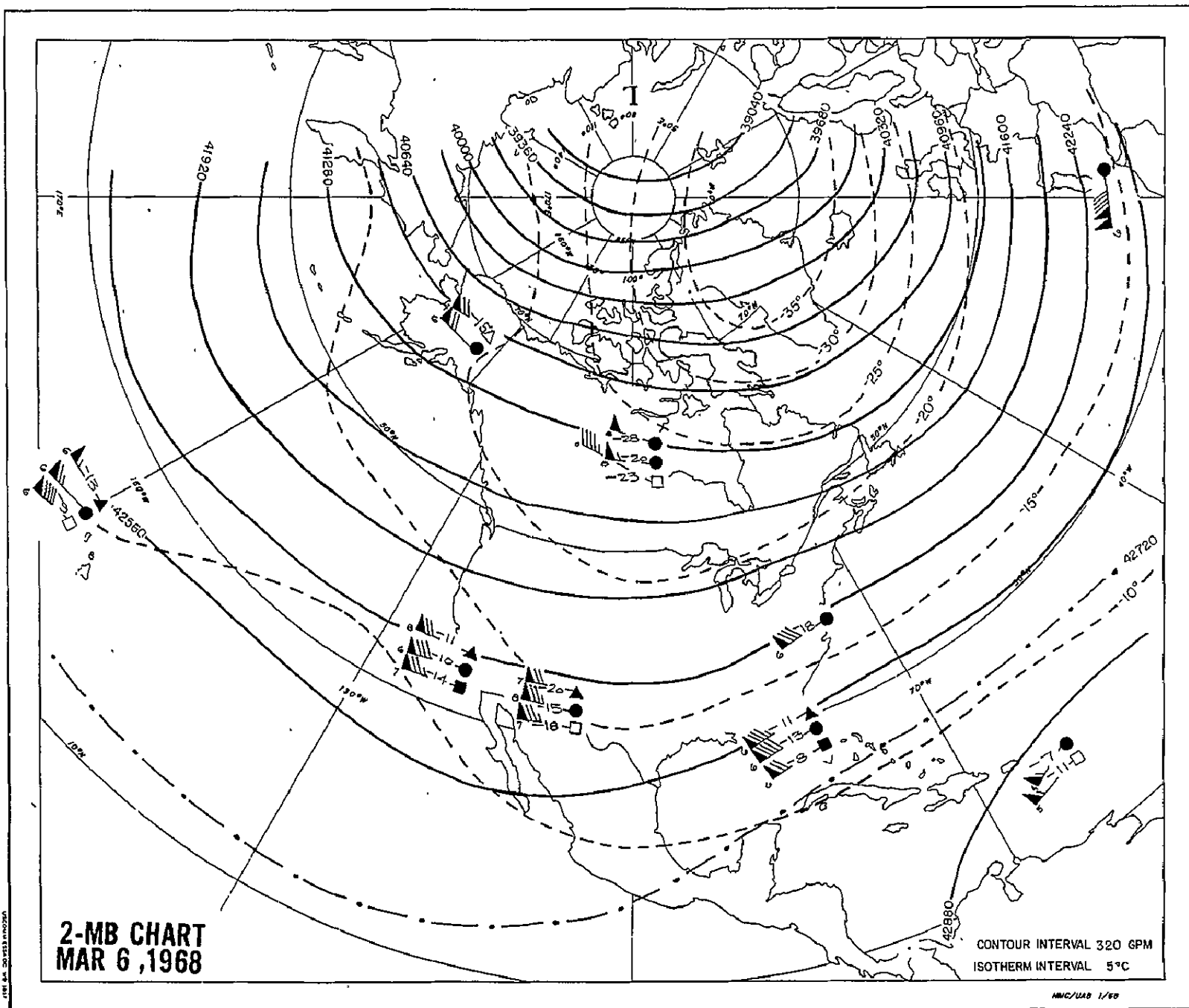


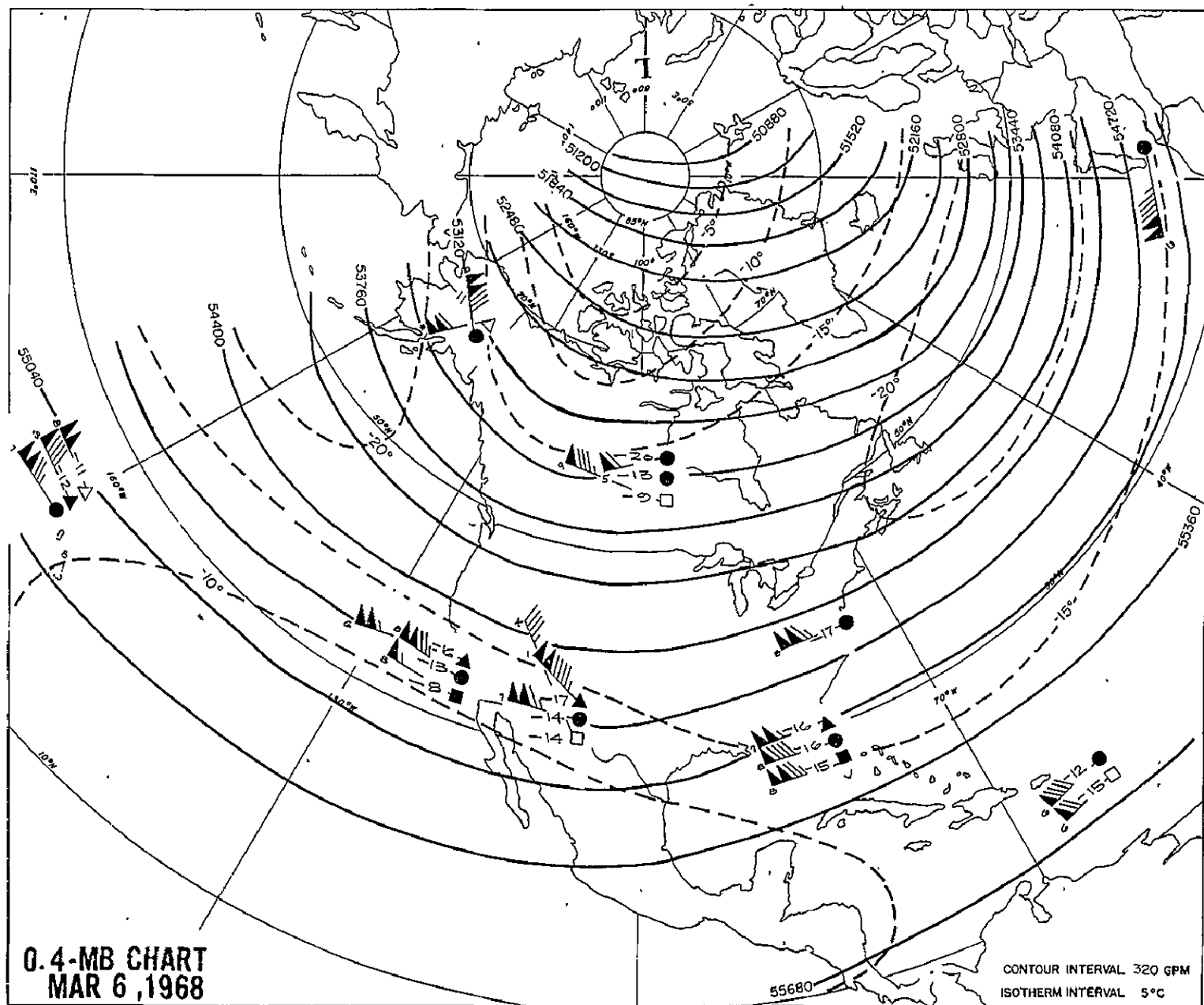


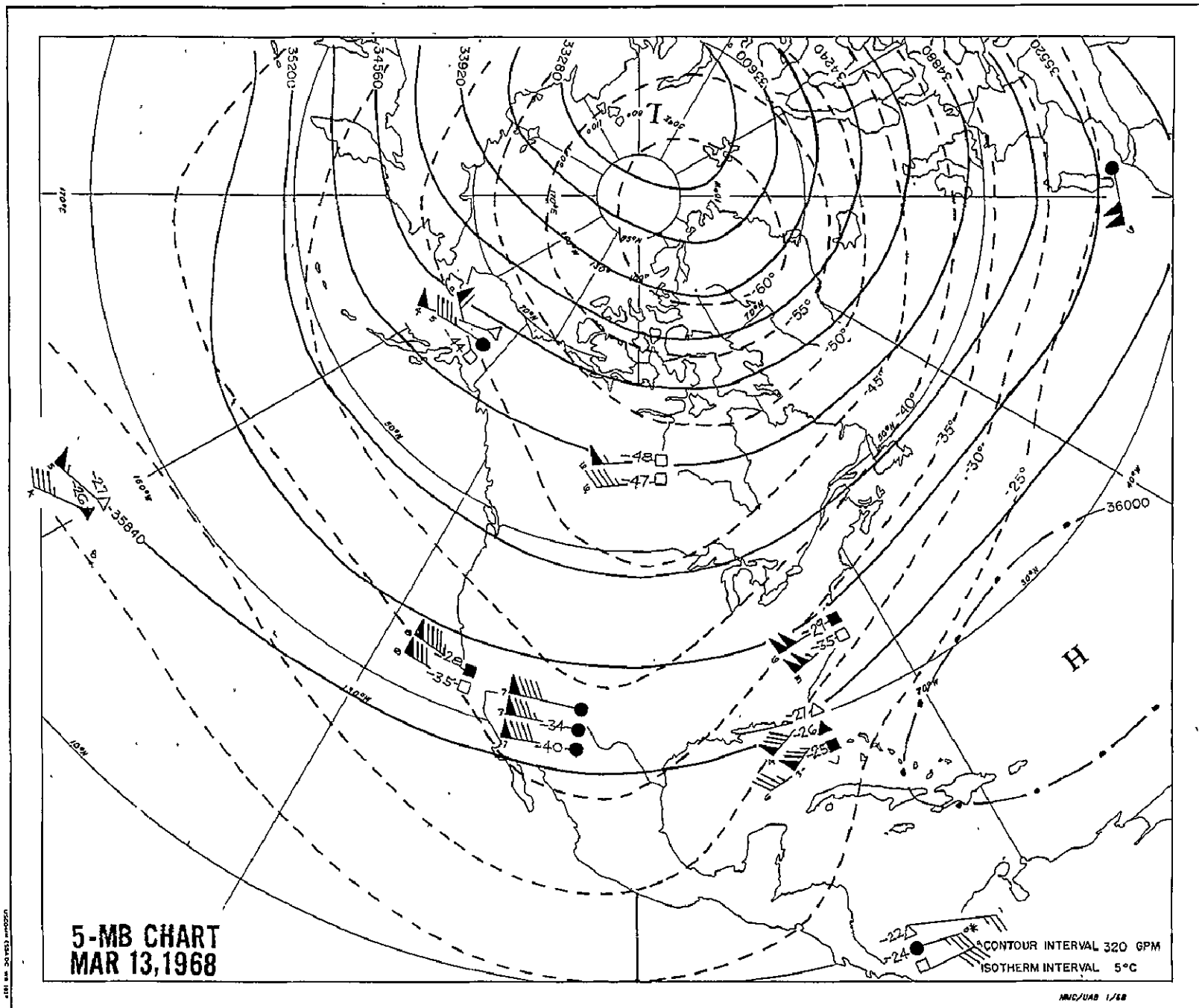




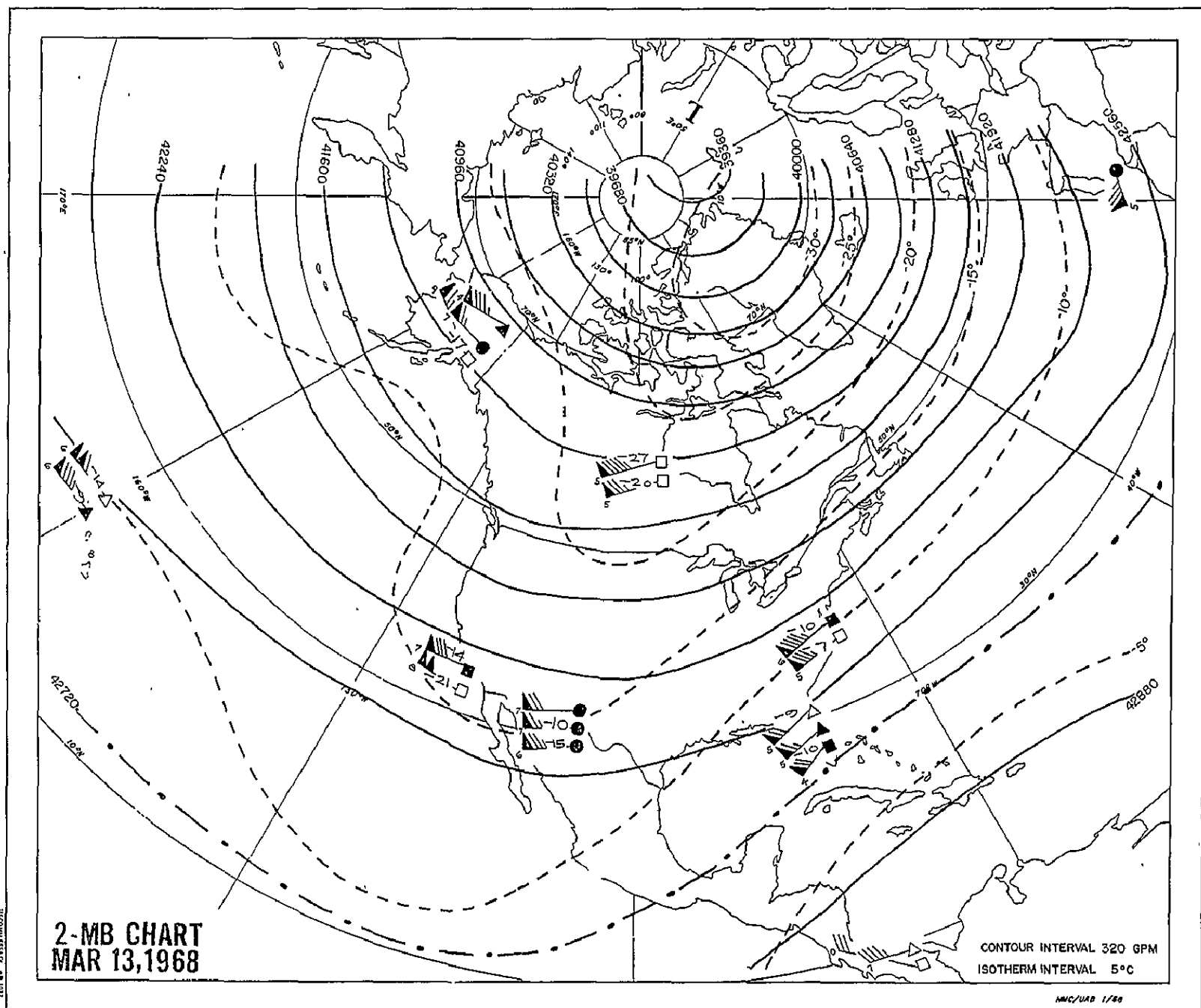


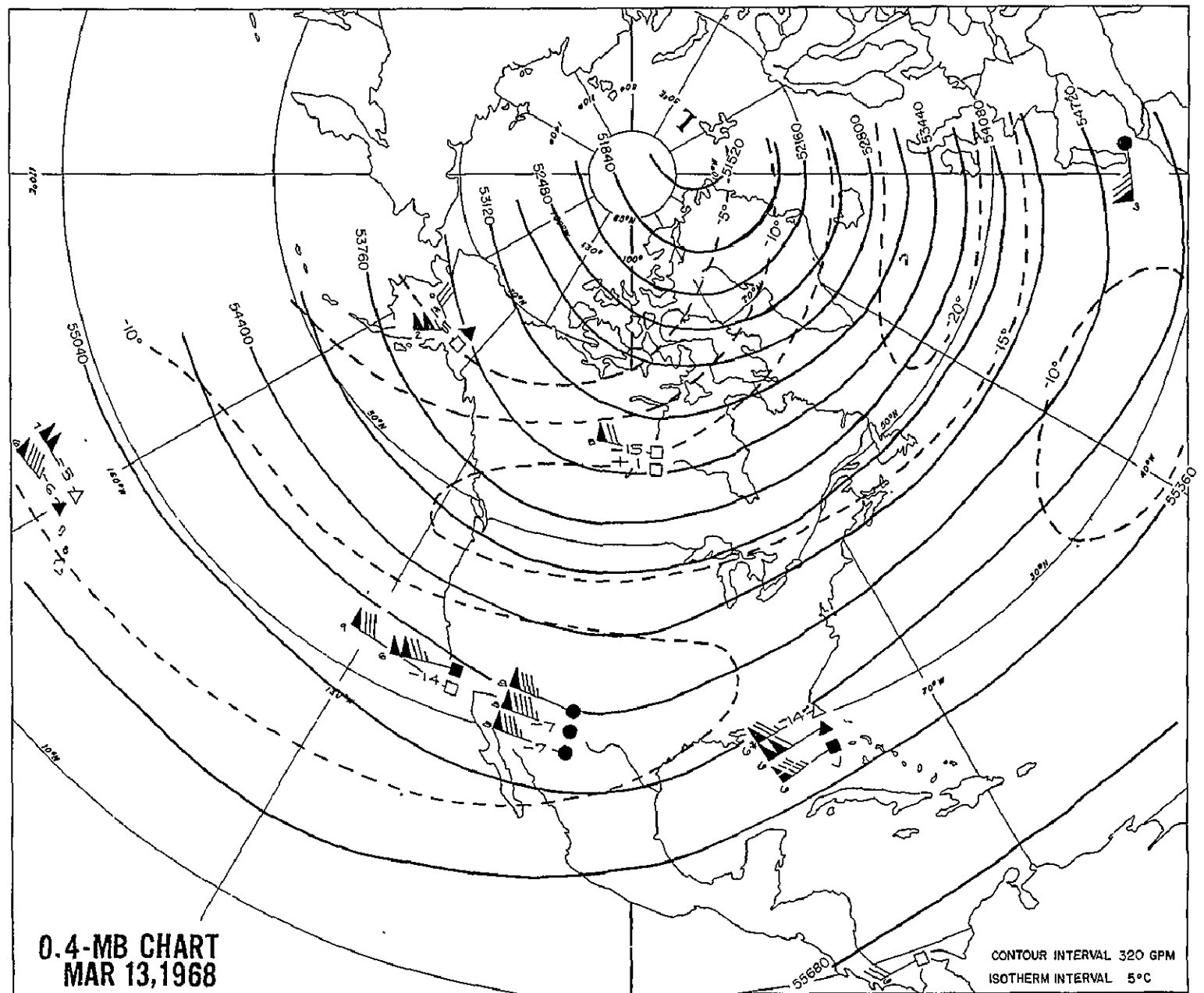


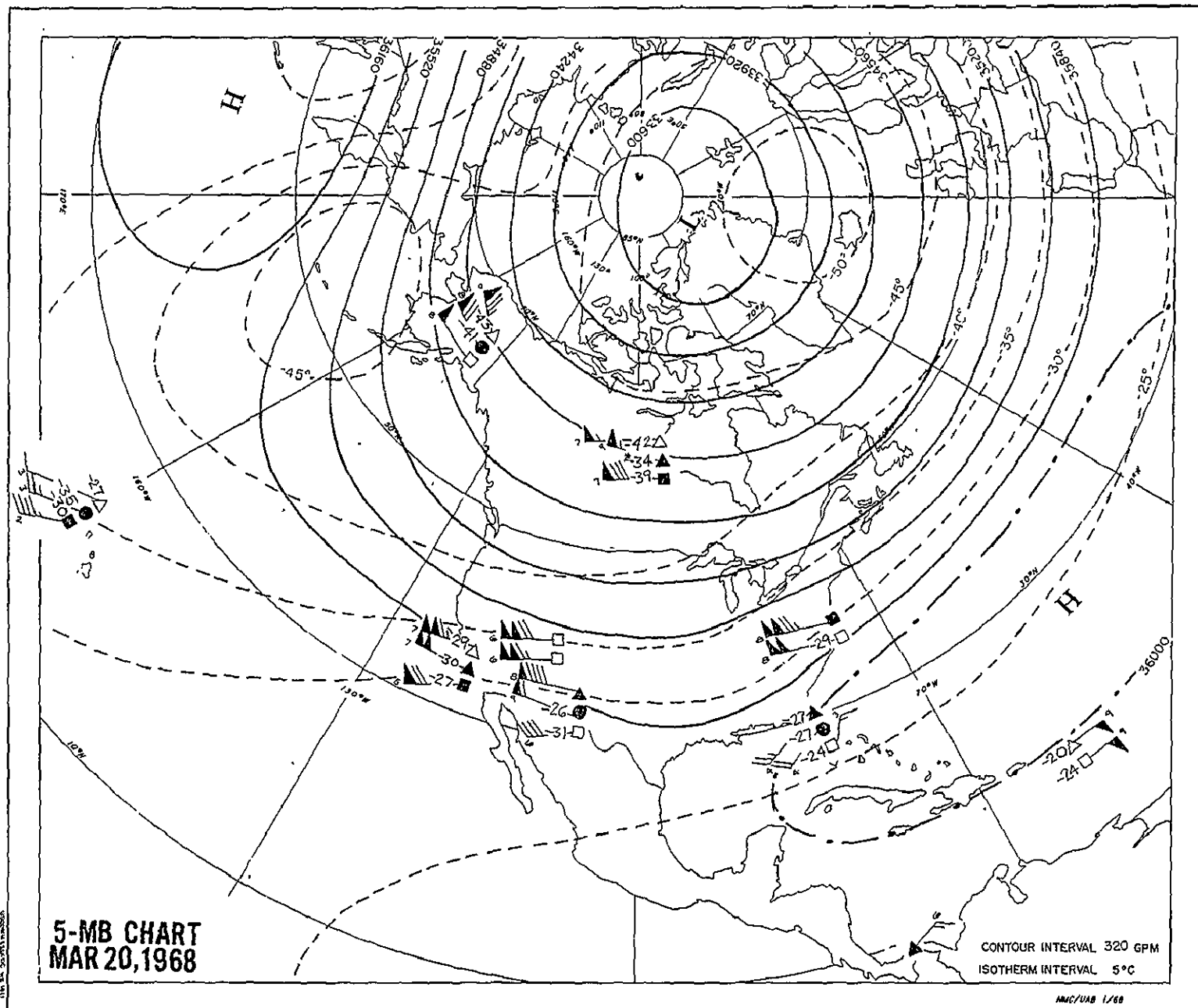


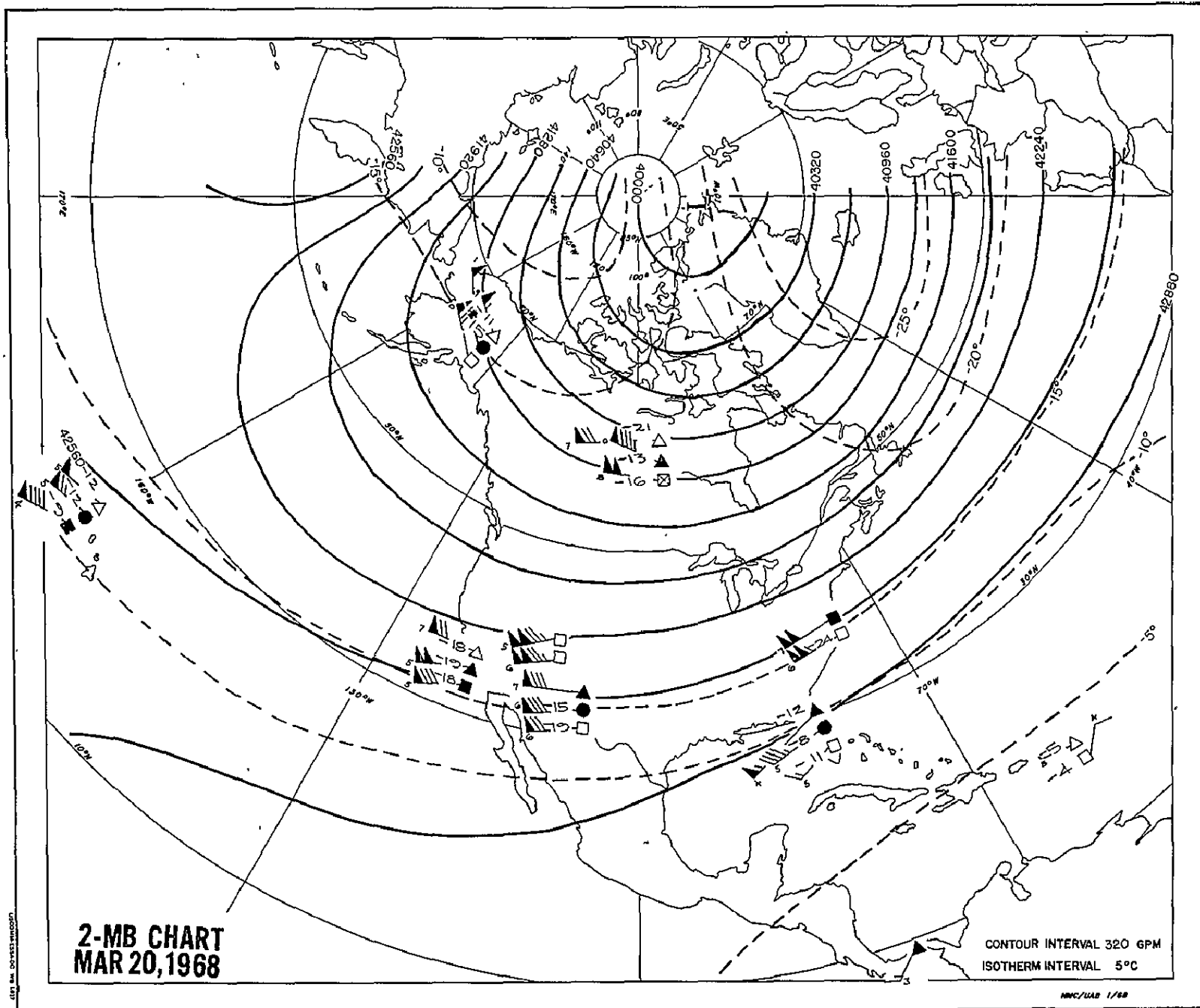


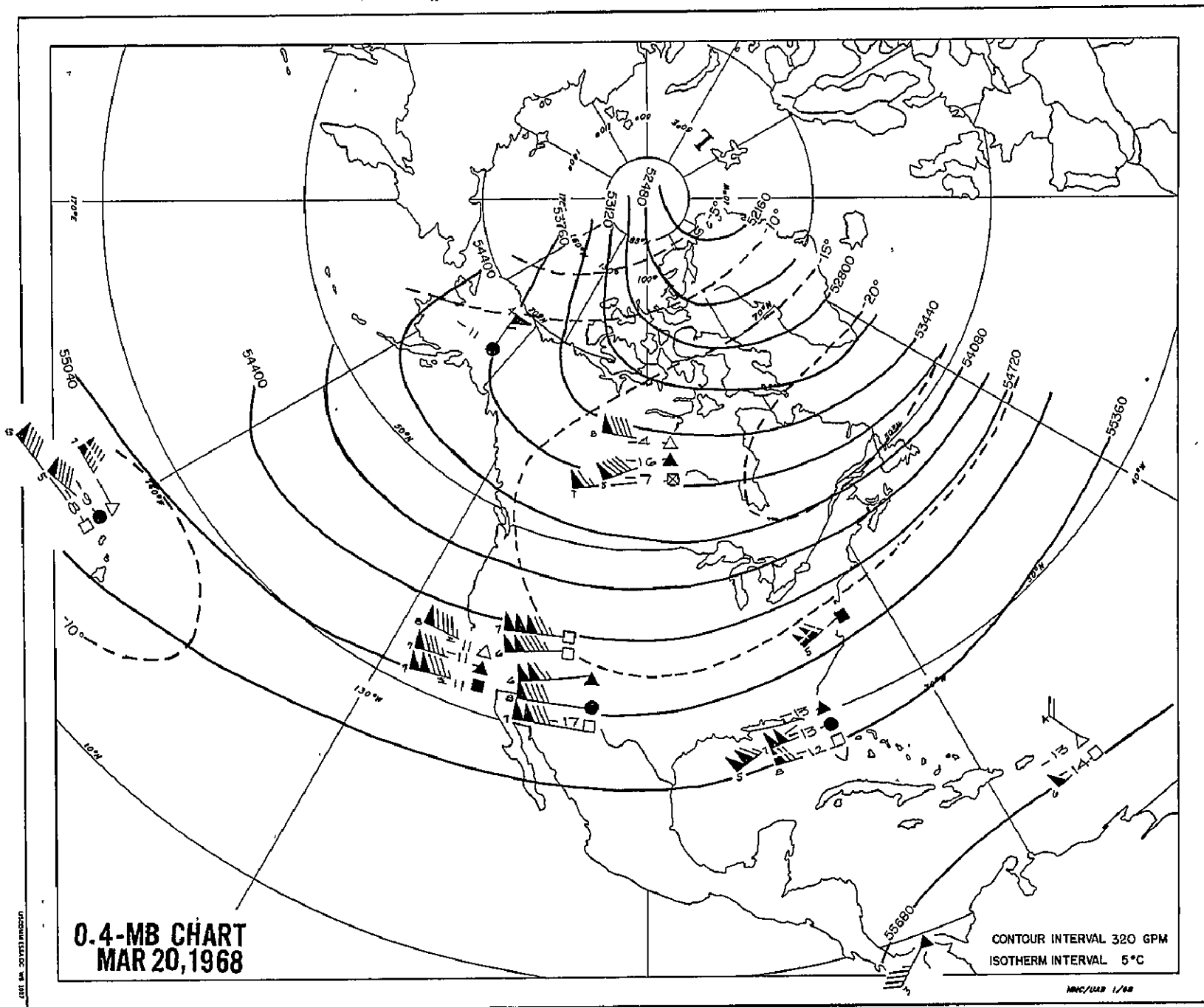


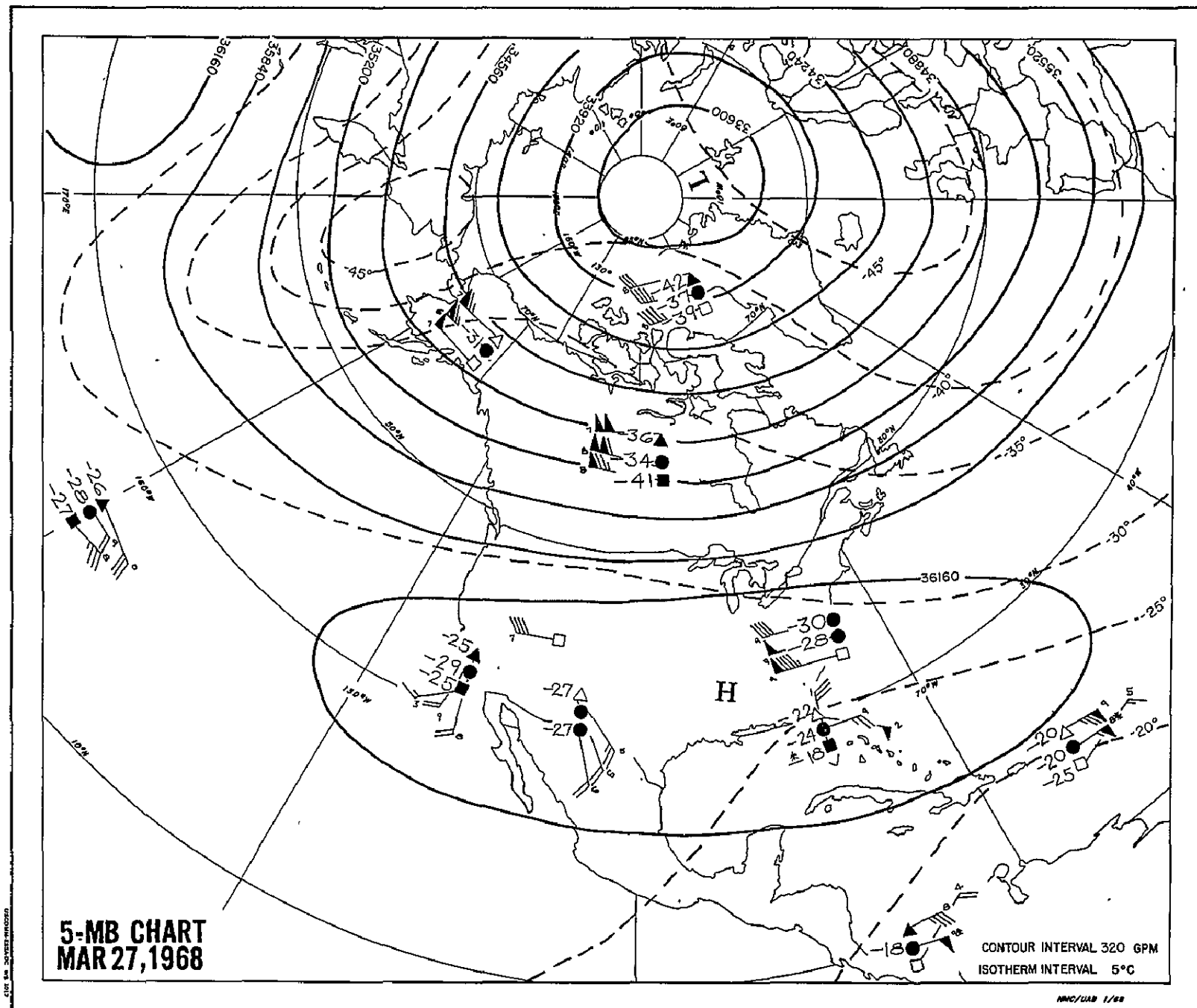


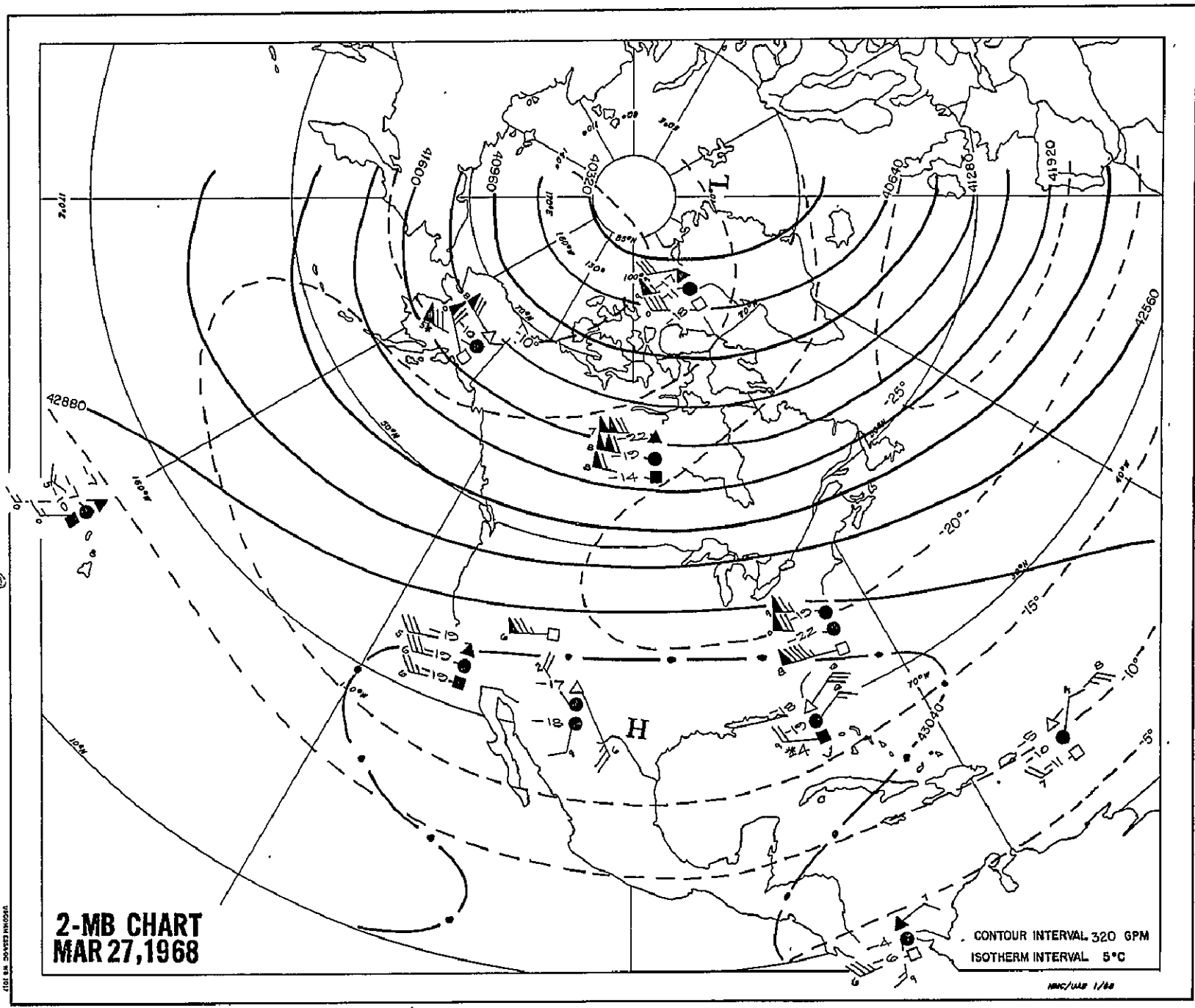


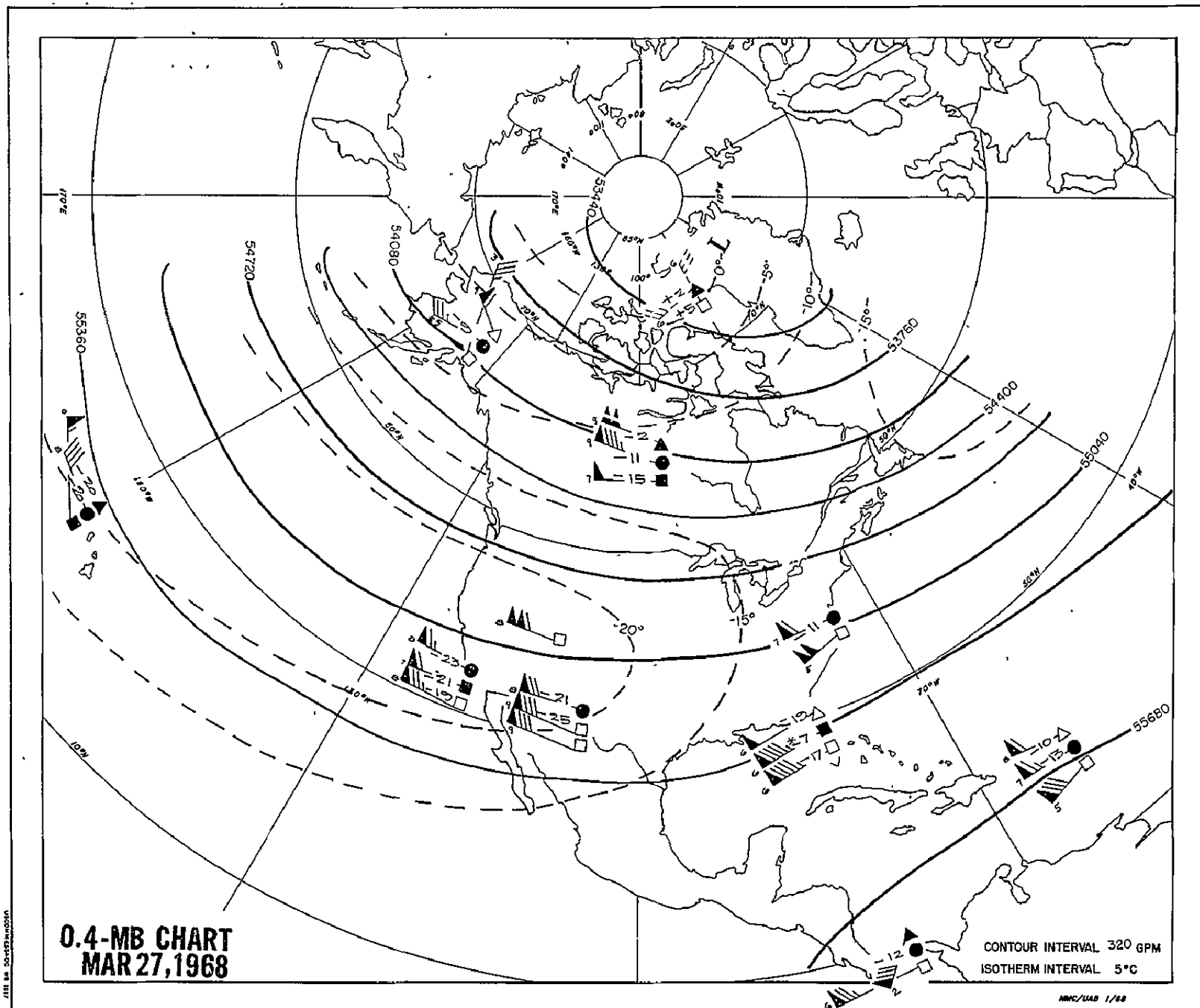




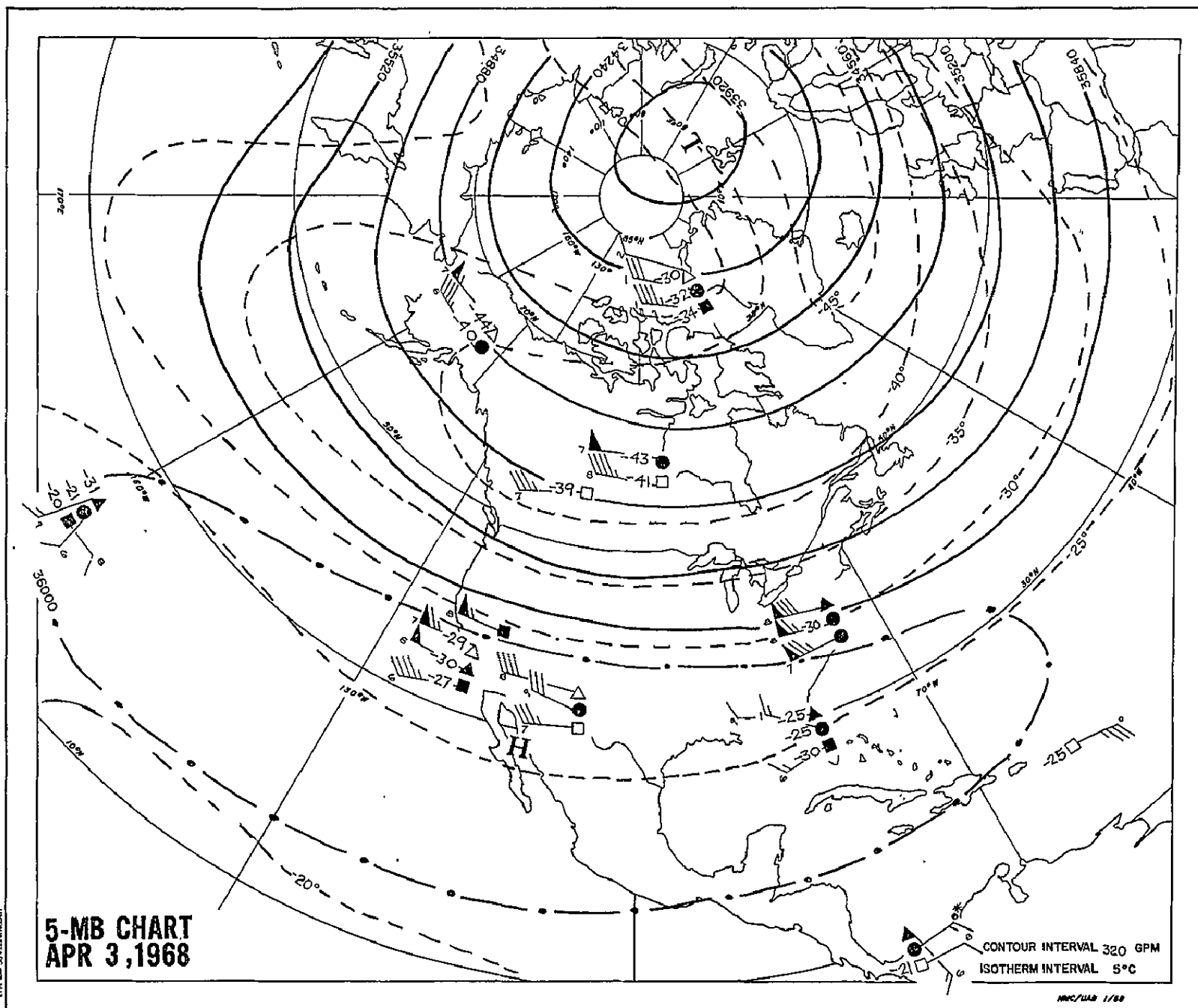


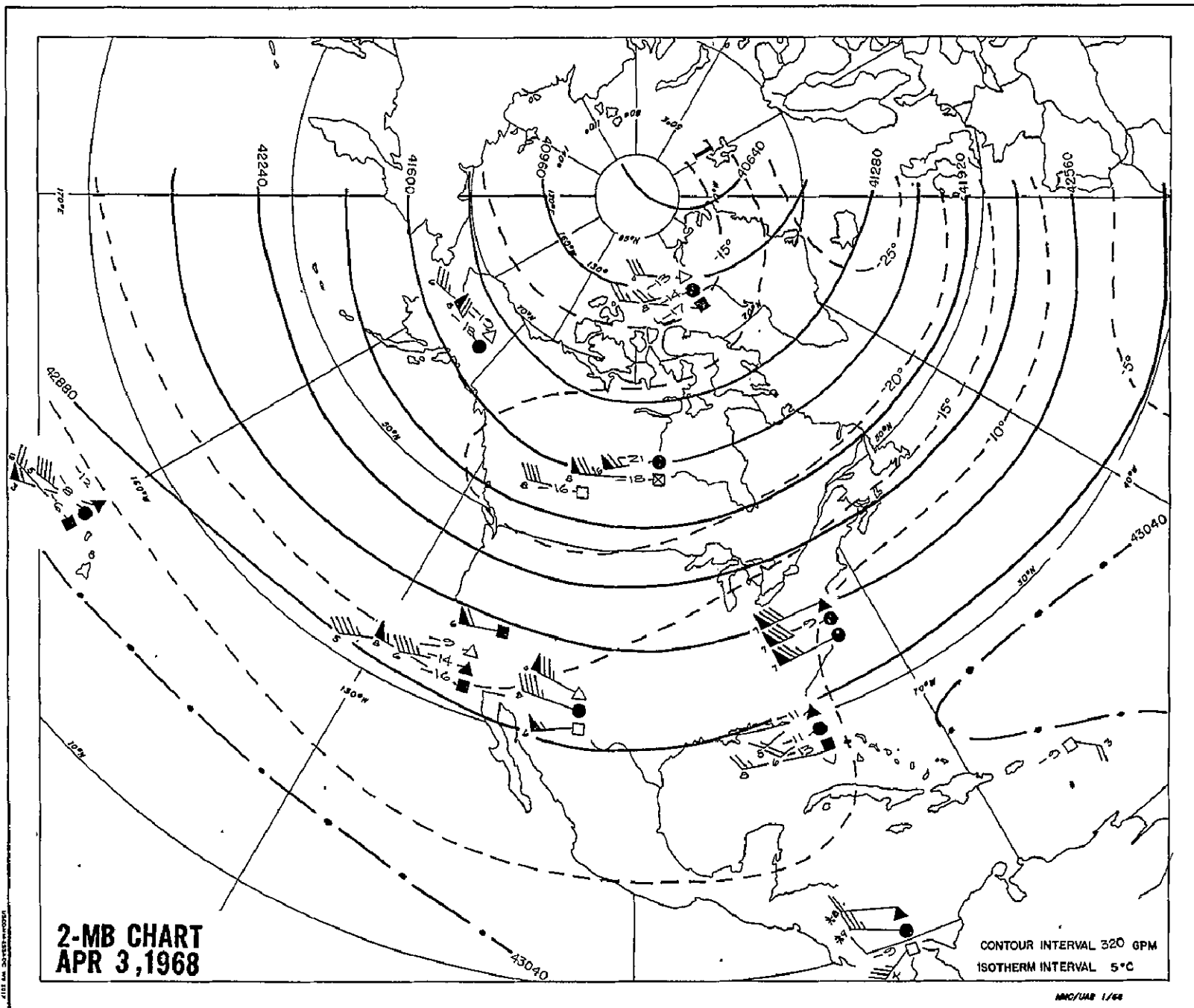


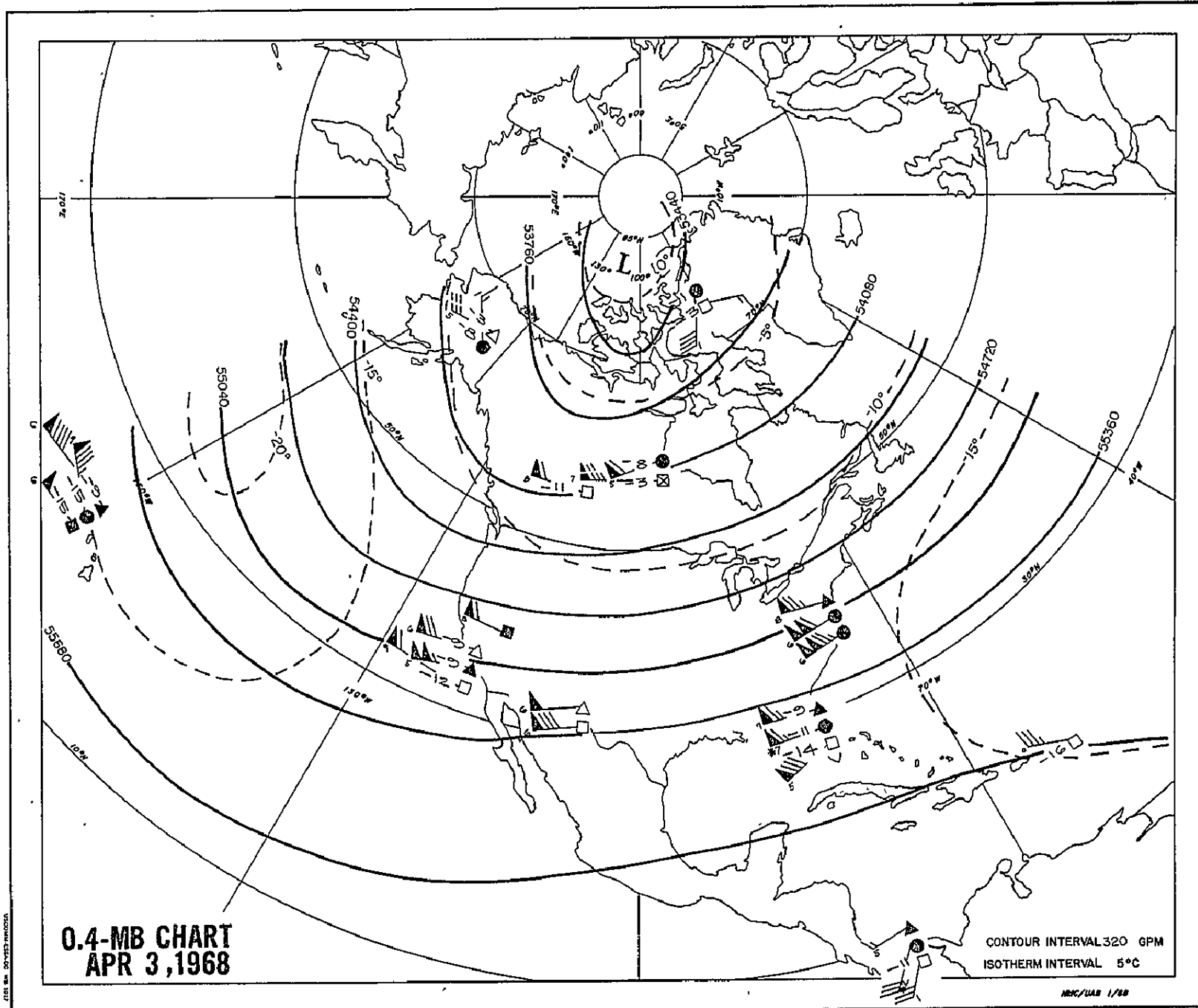




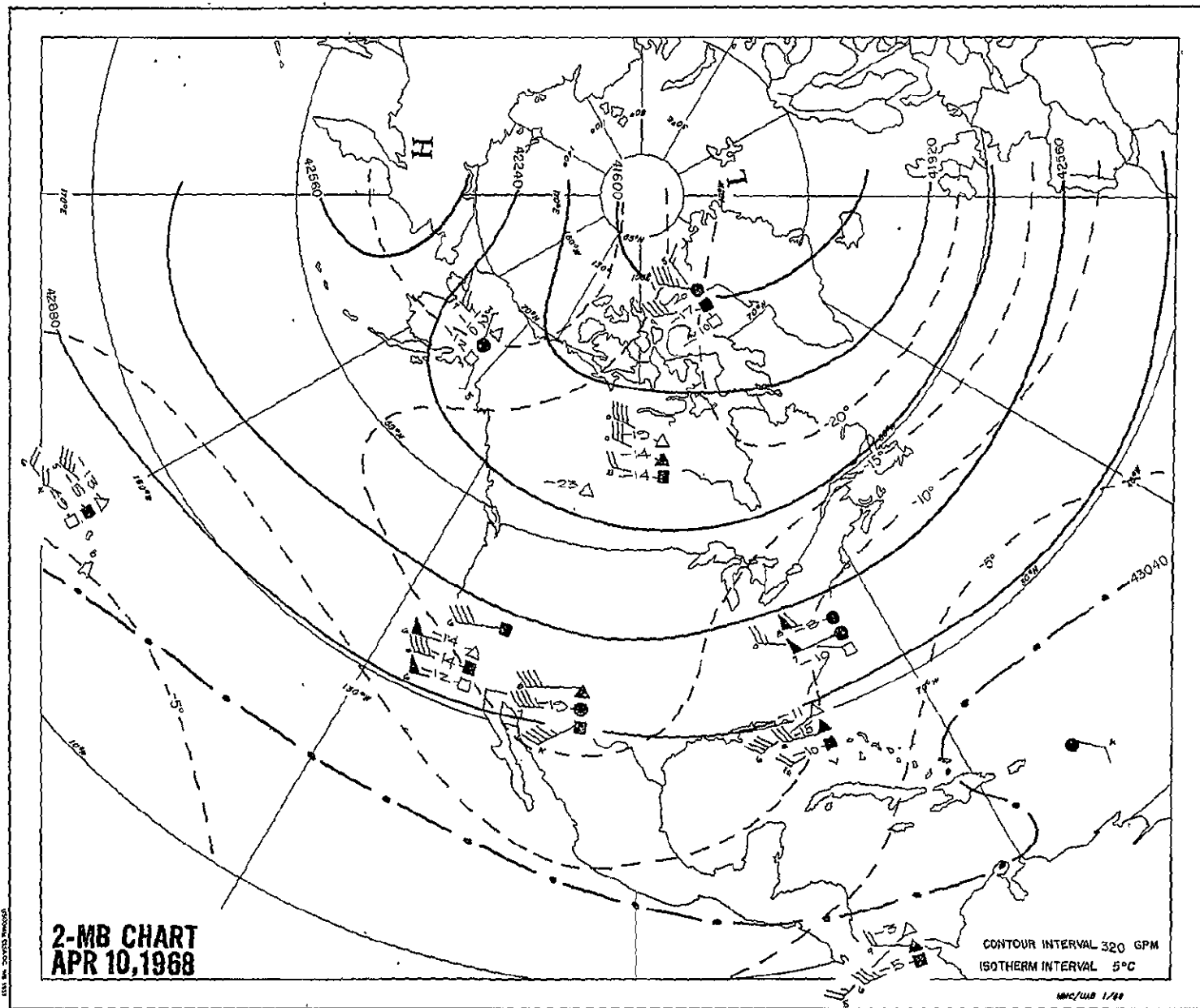


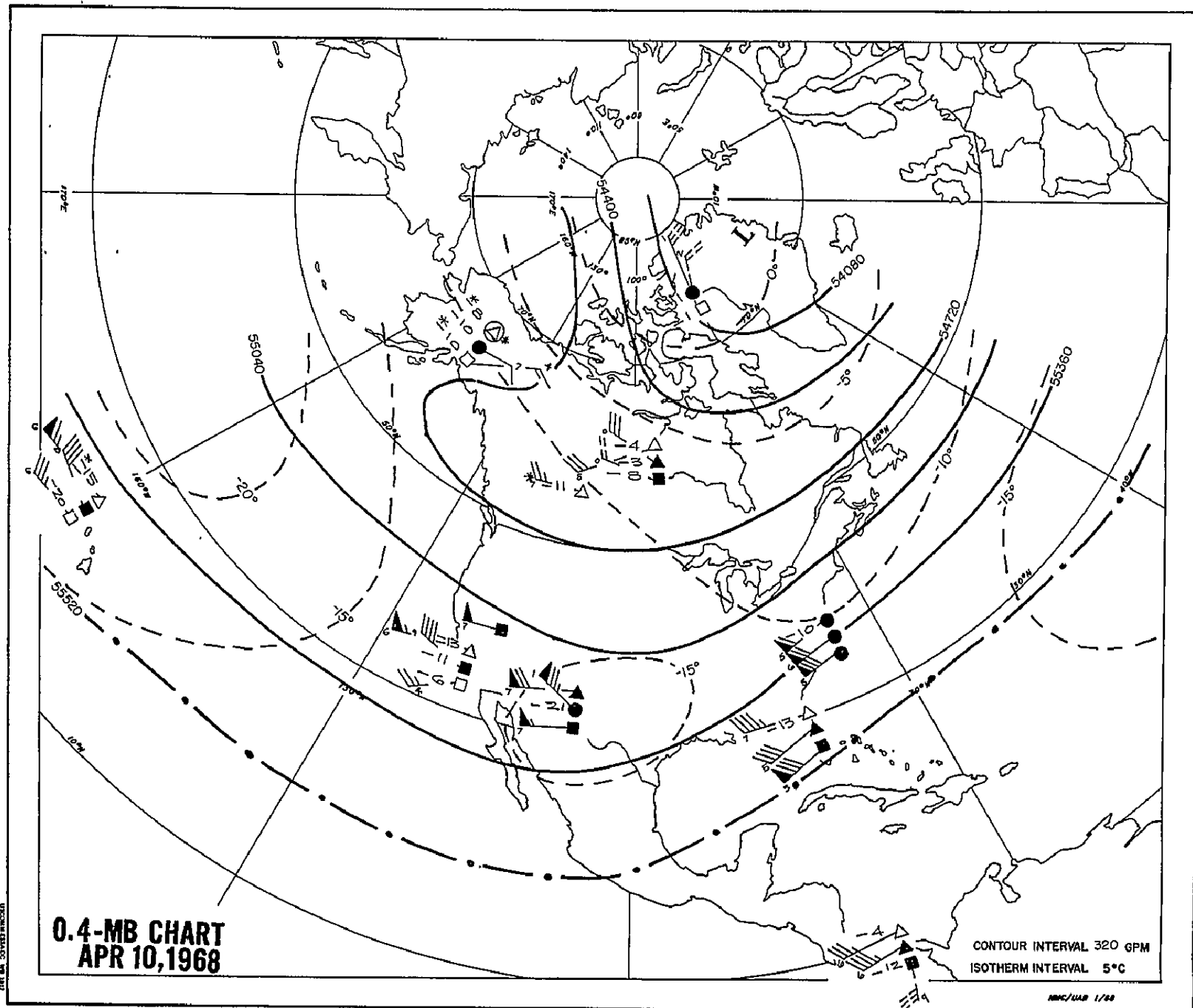


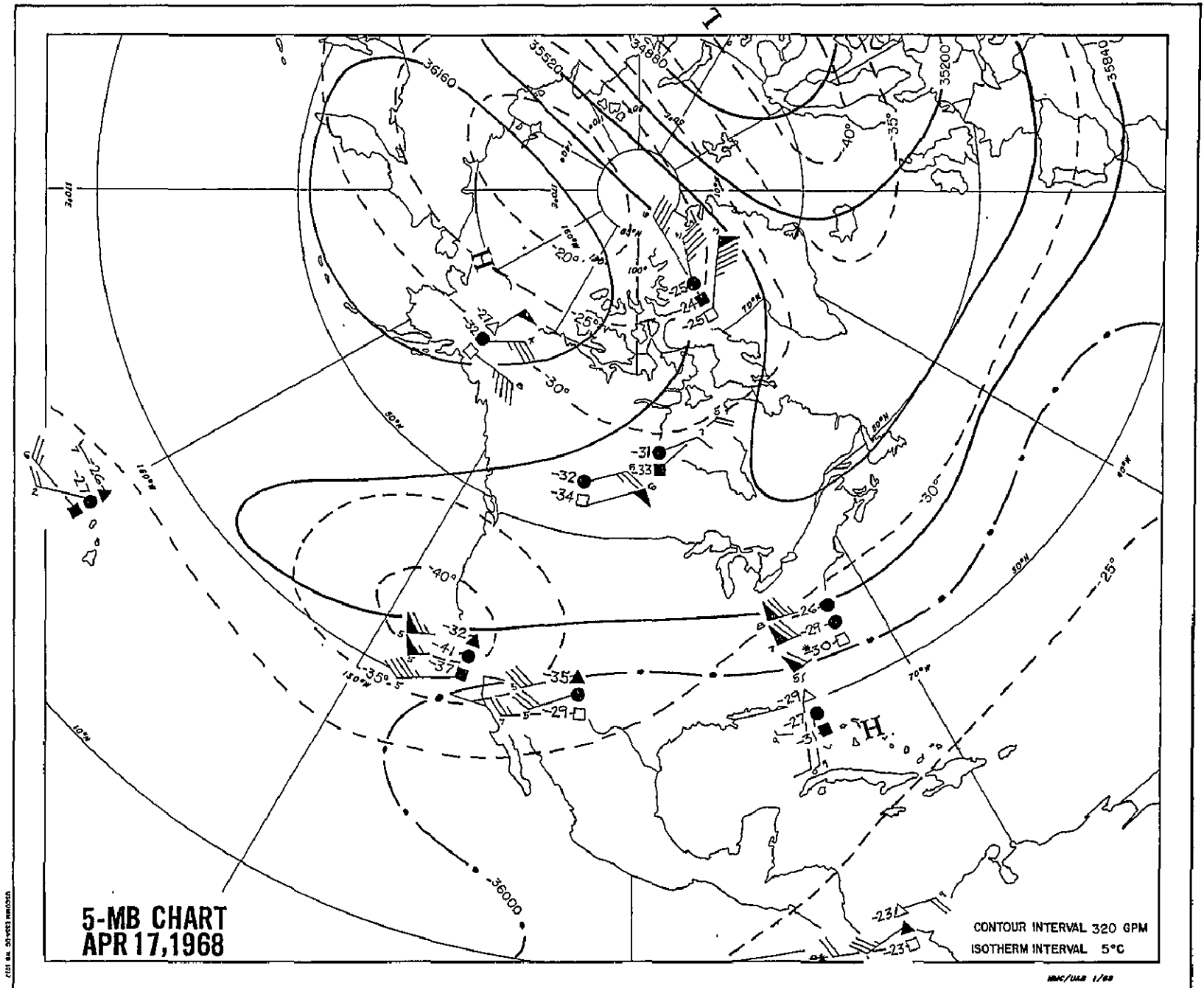


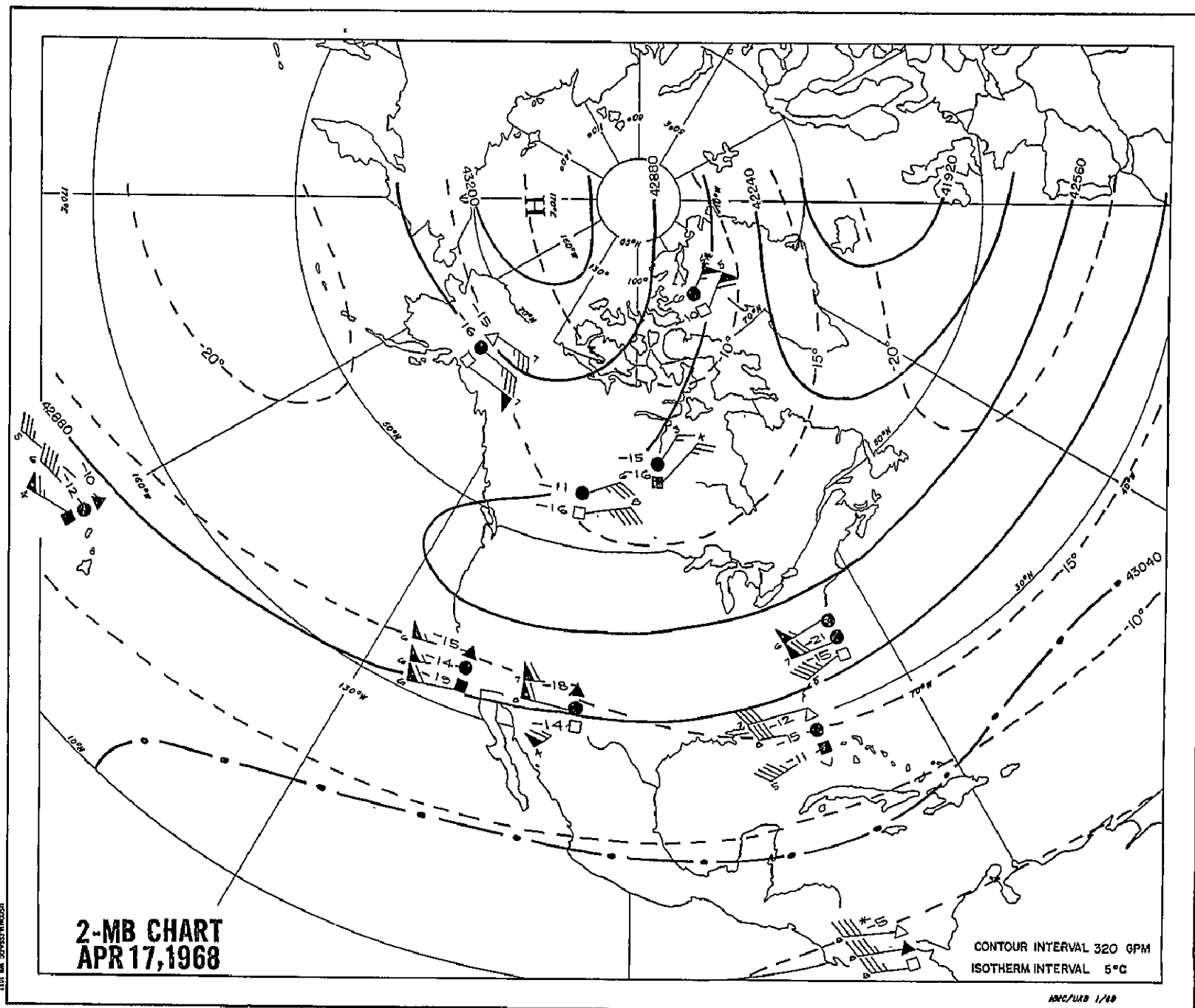




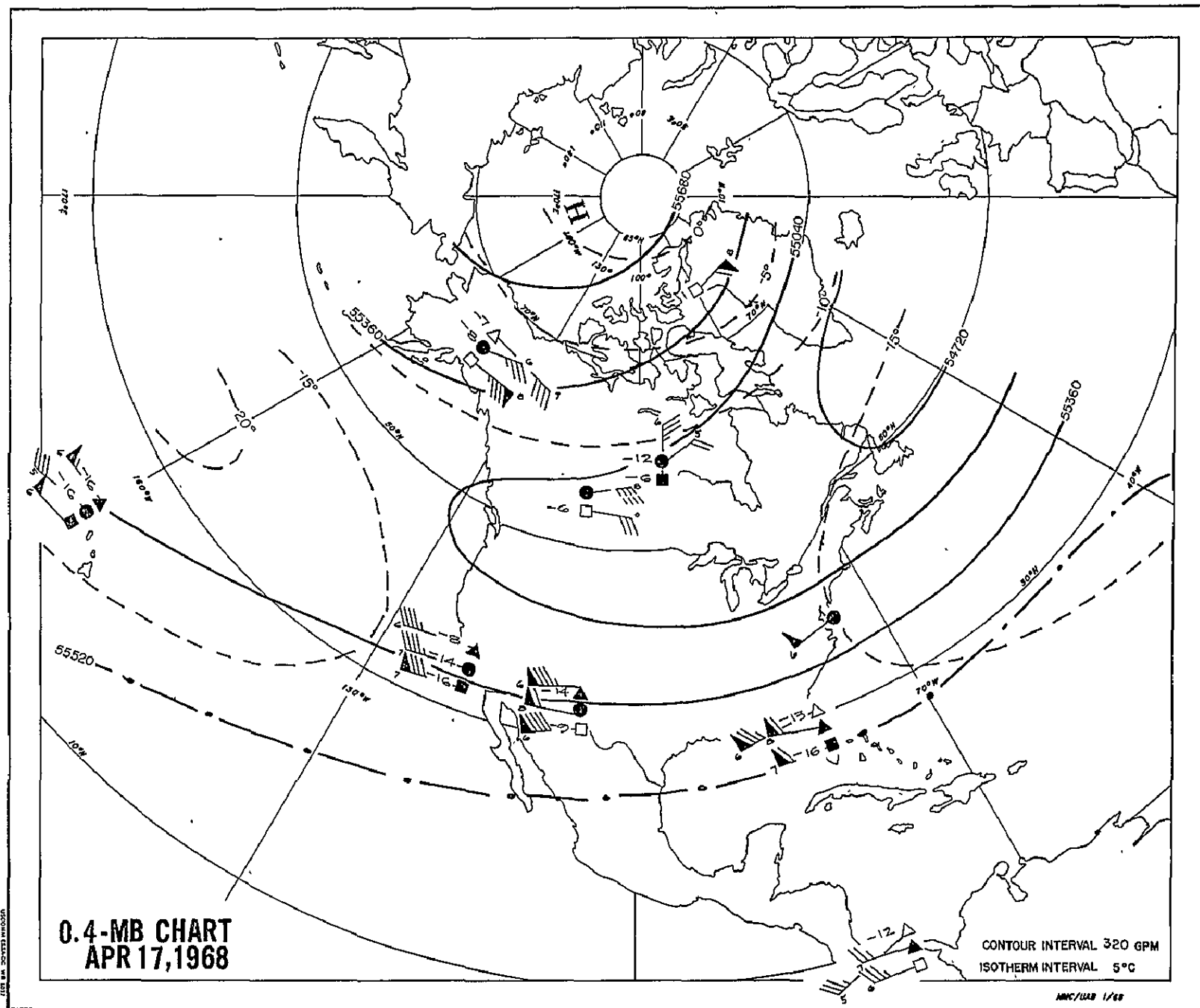


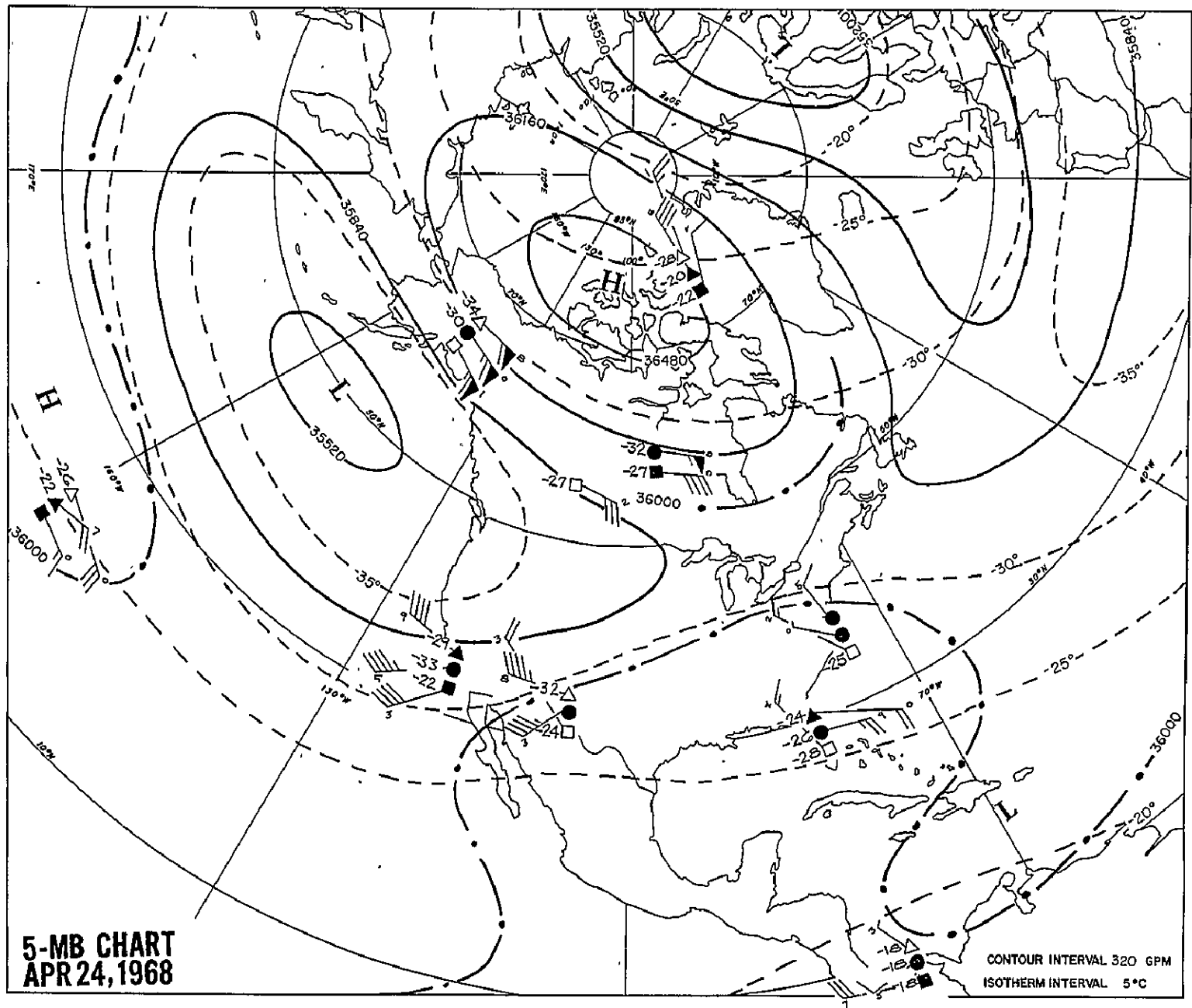


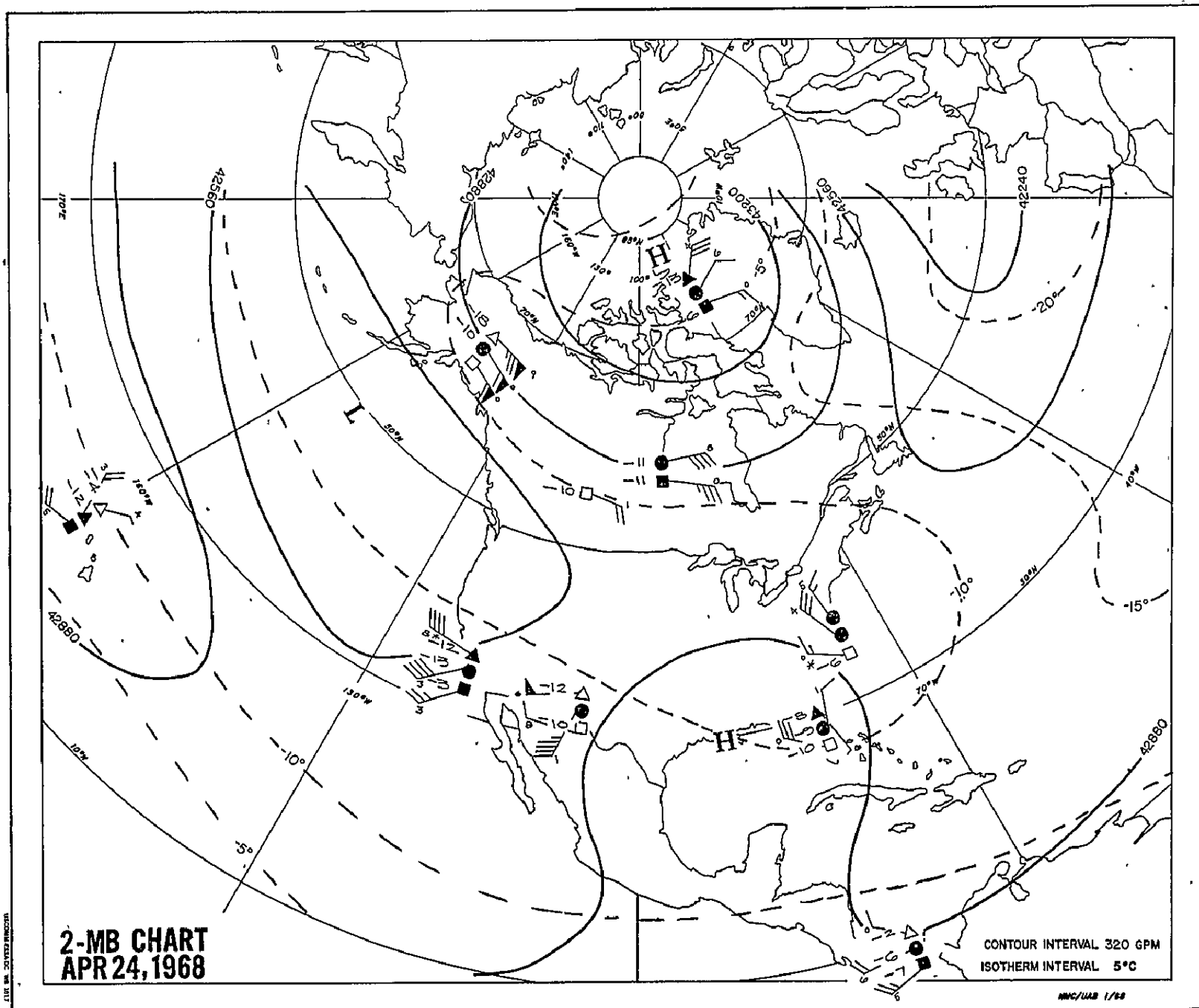






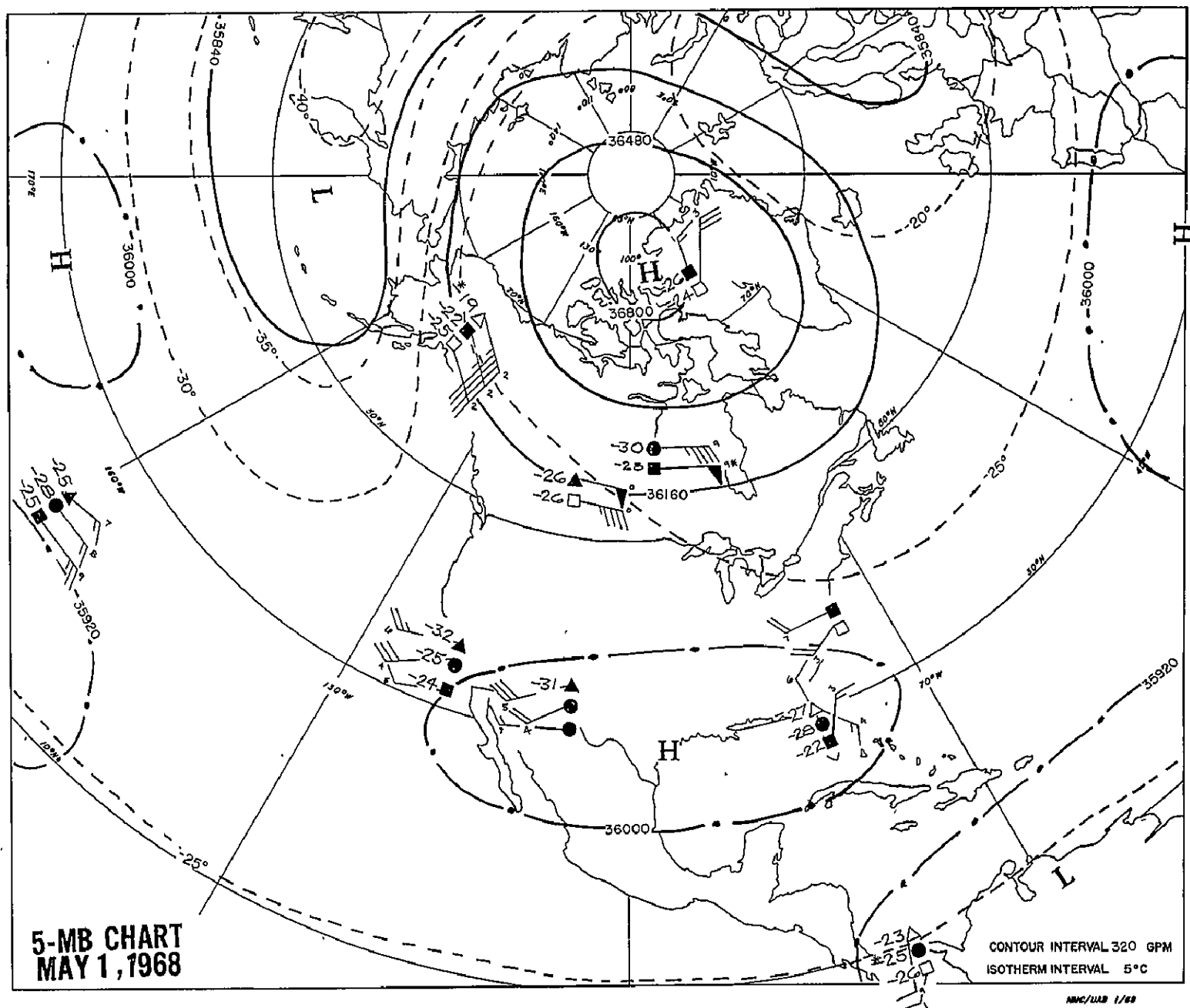


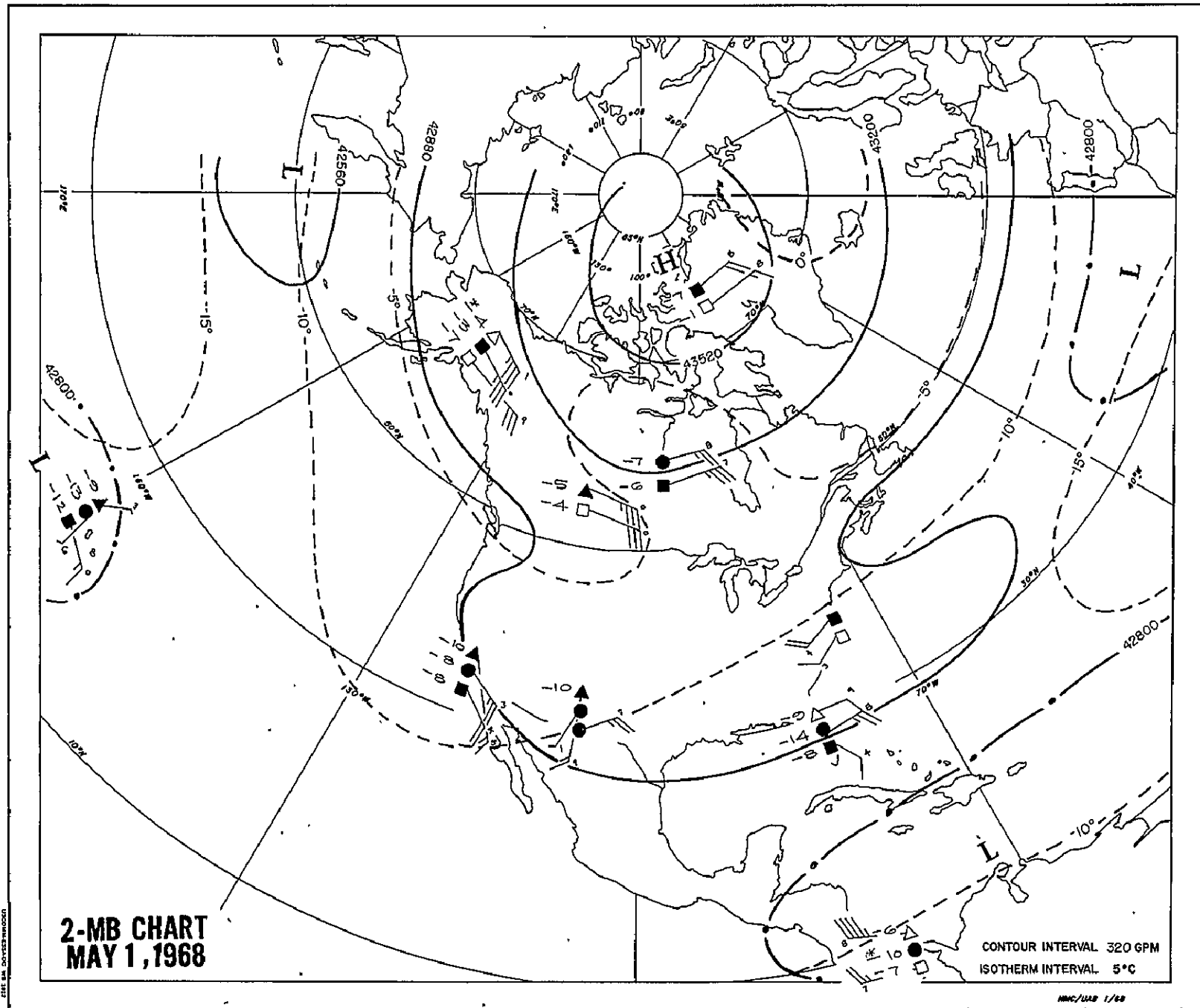


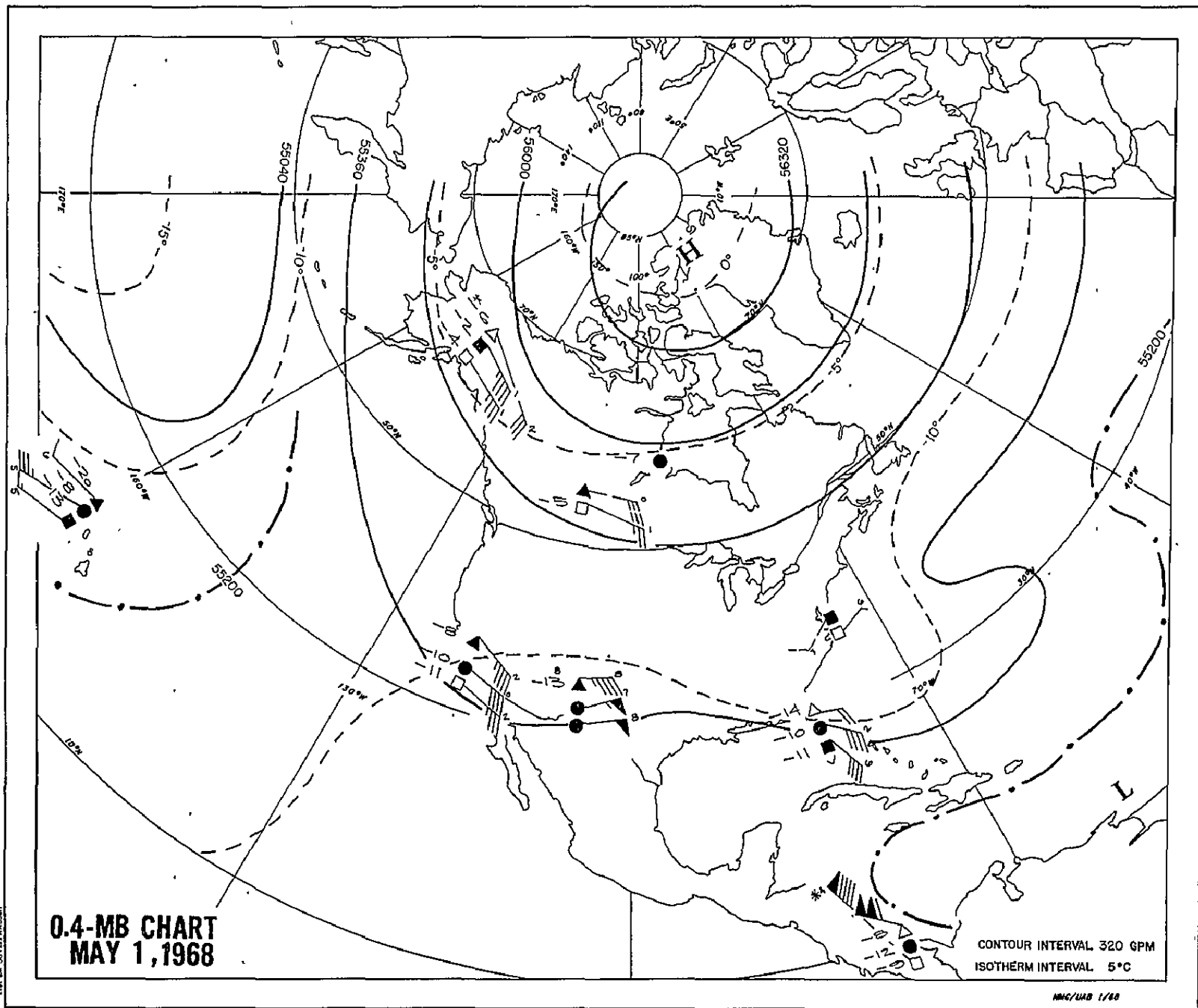


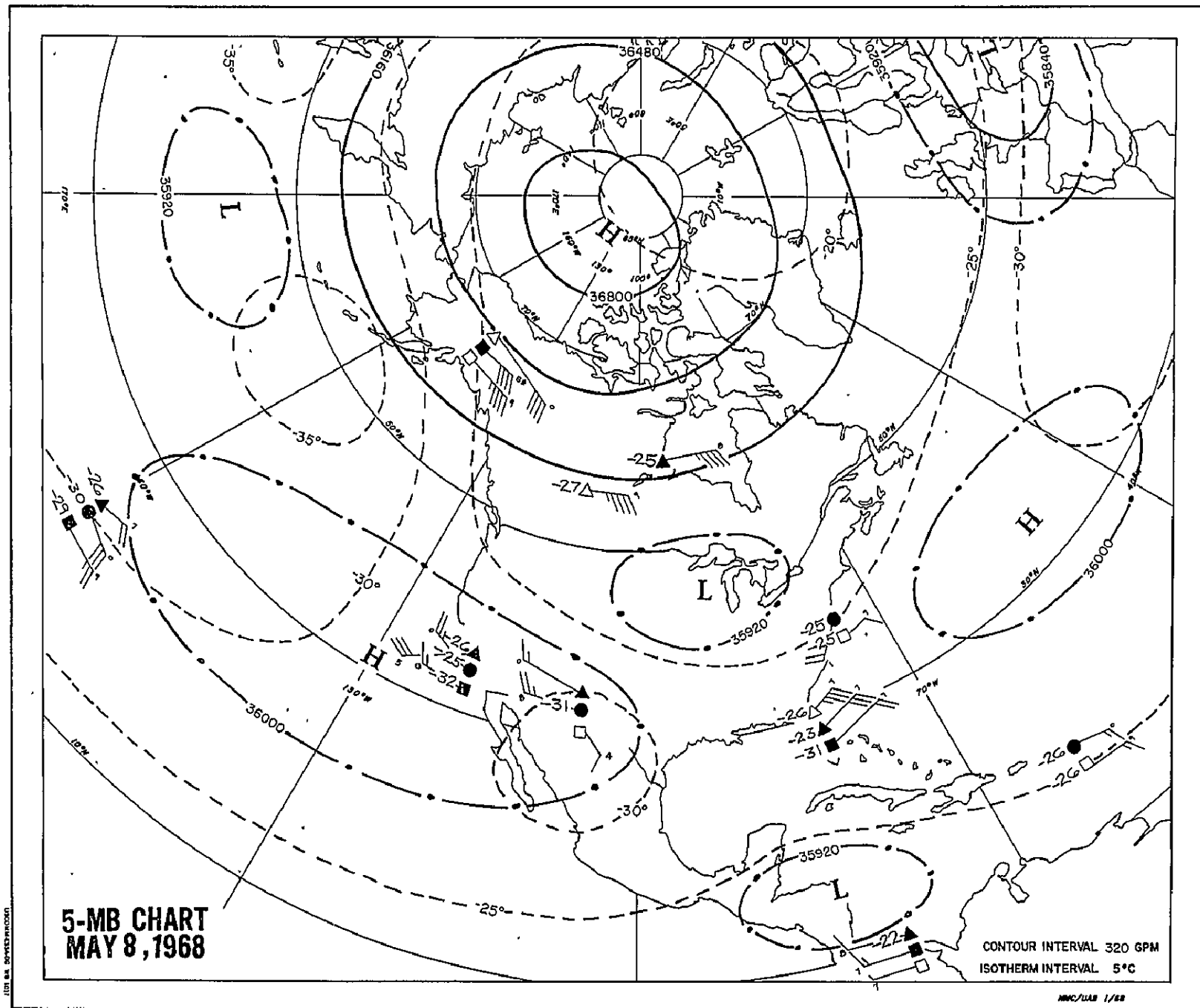


**5-MB CHART**  
**MAY 1, 1968**

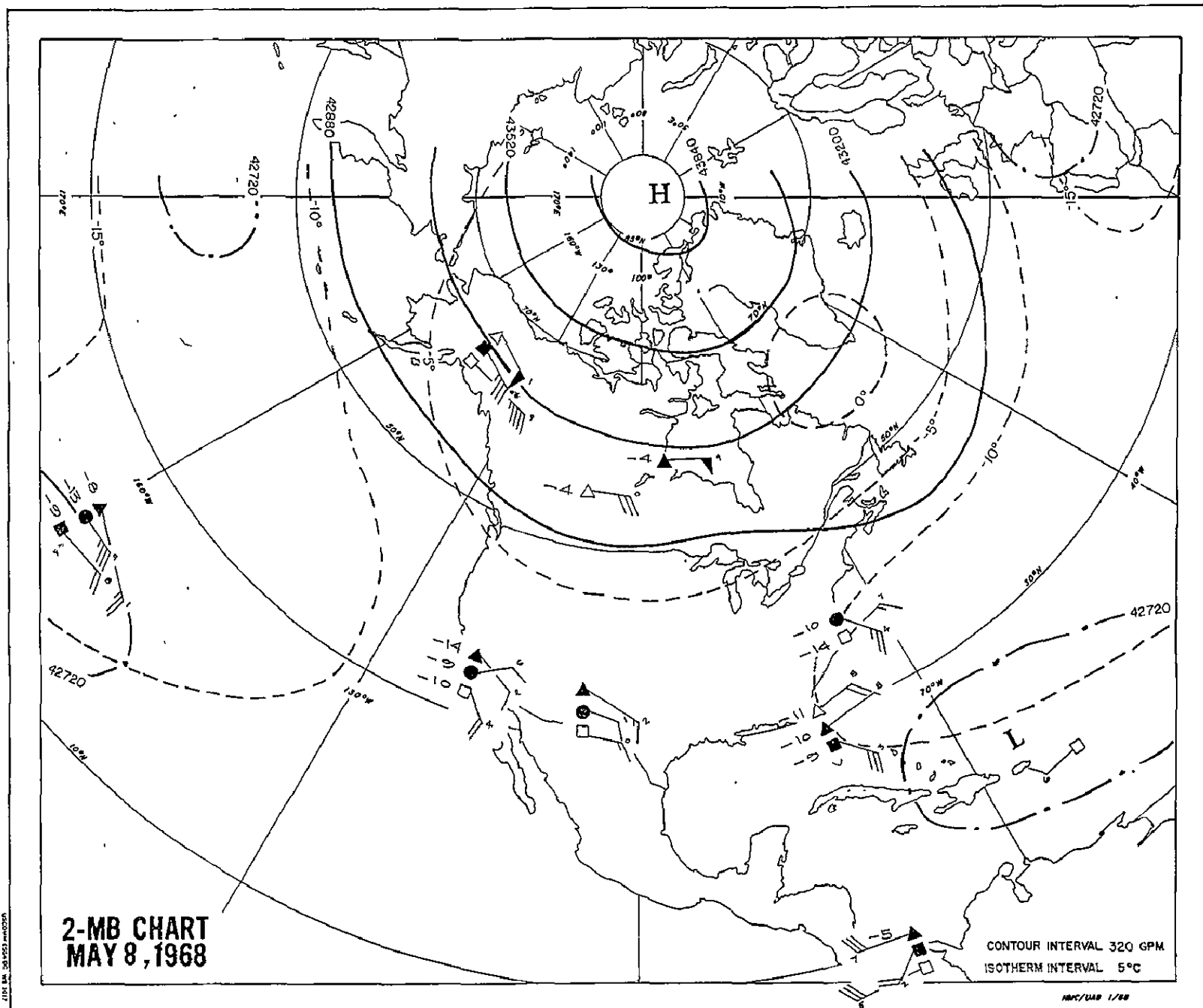




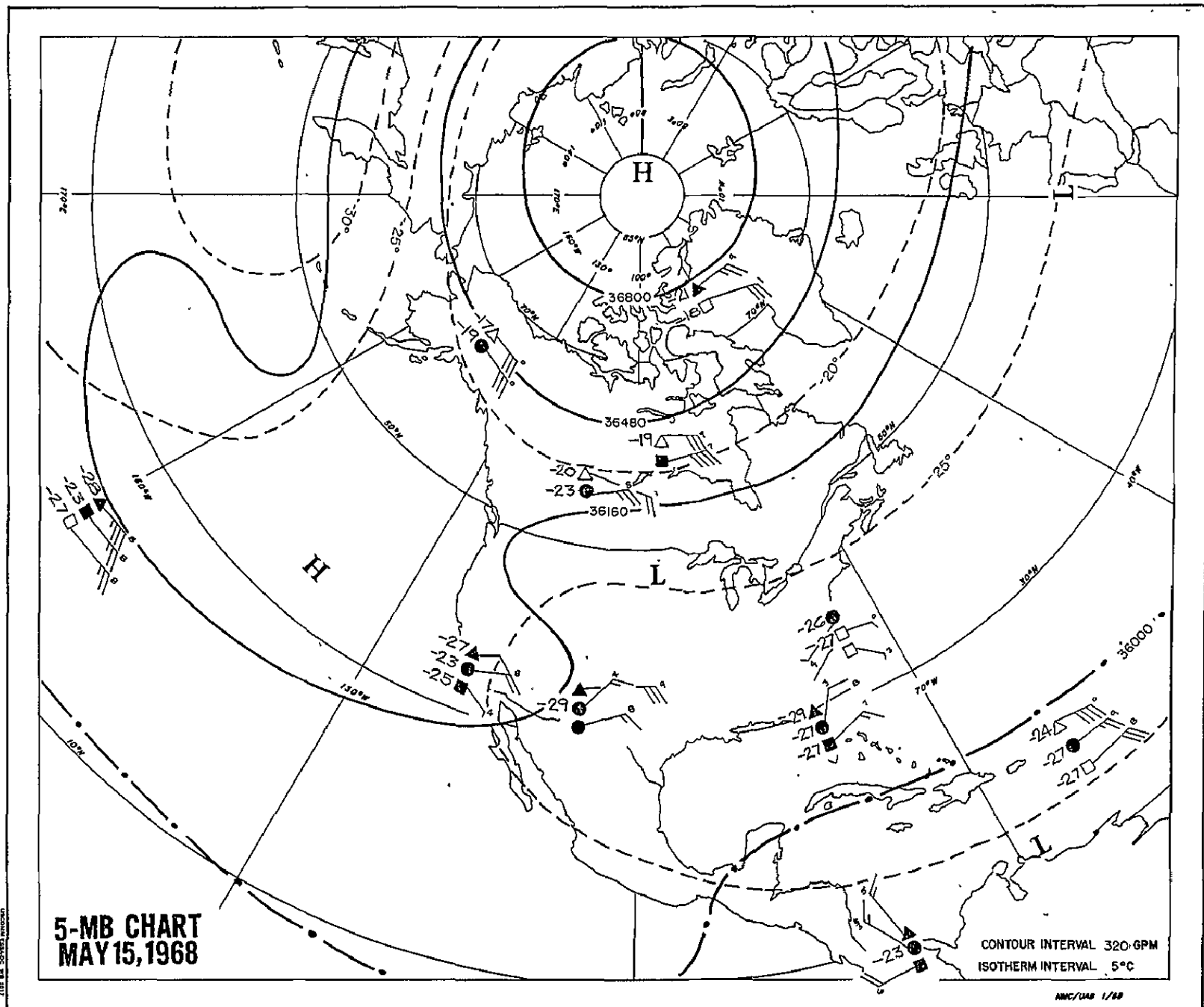


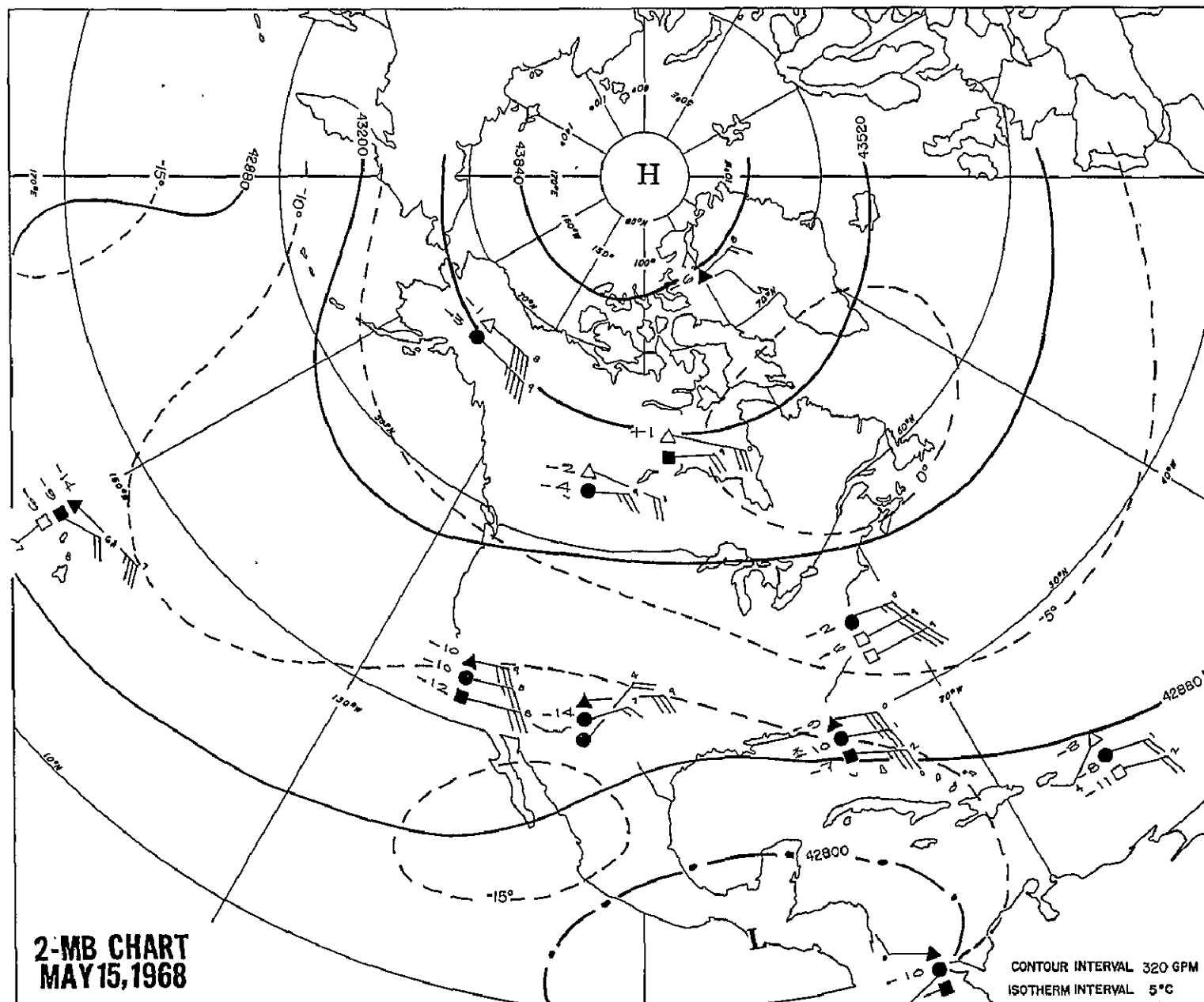


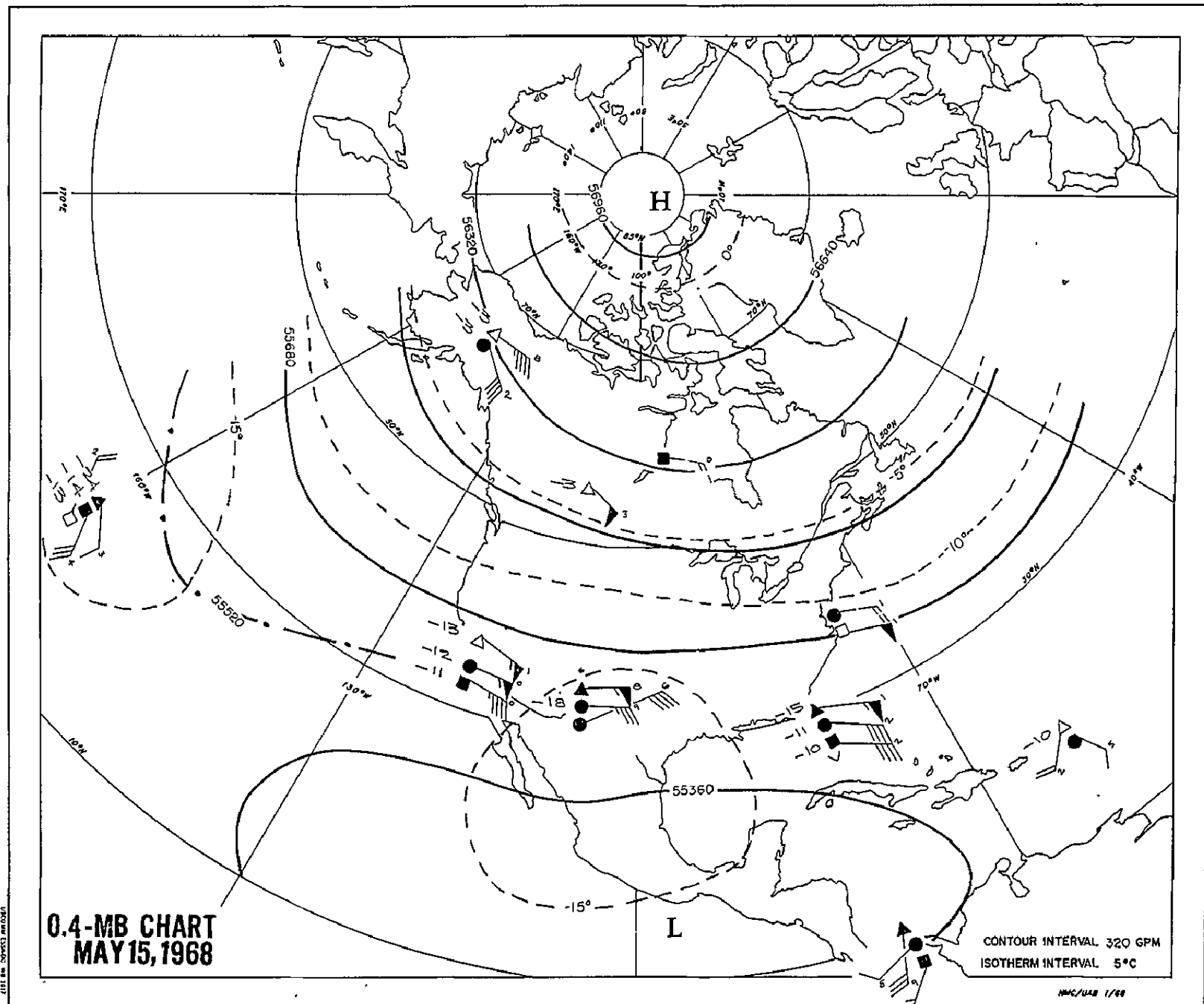


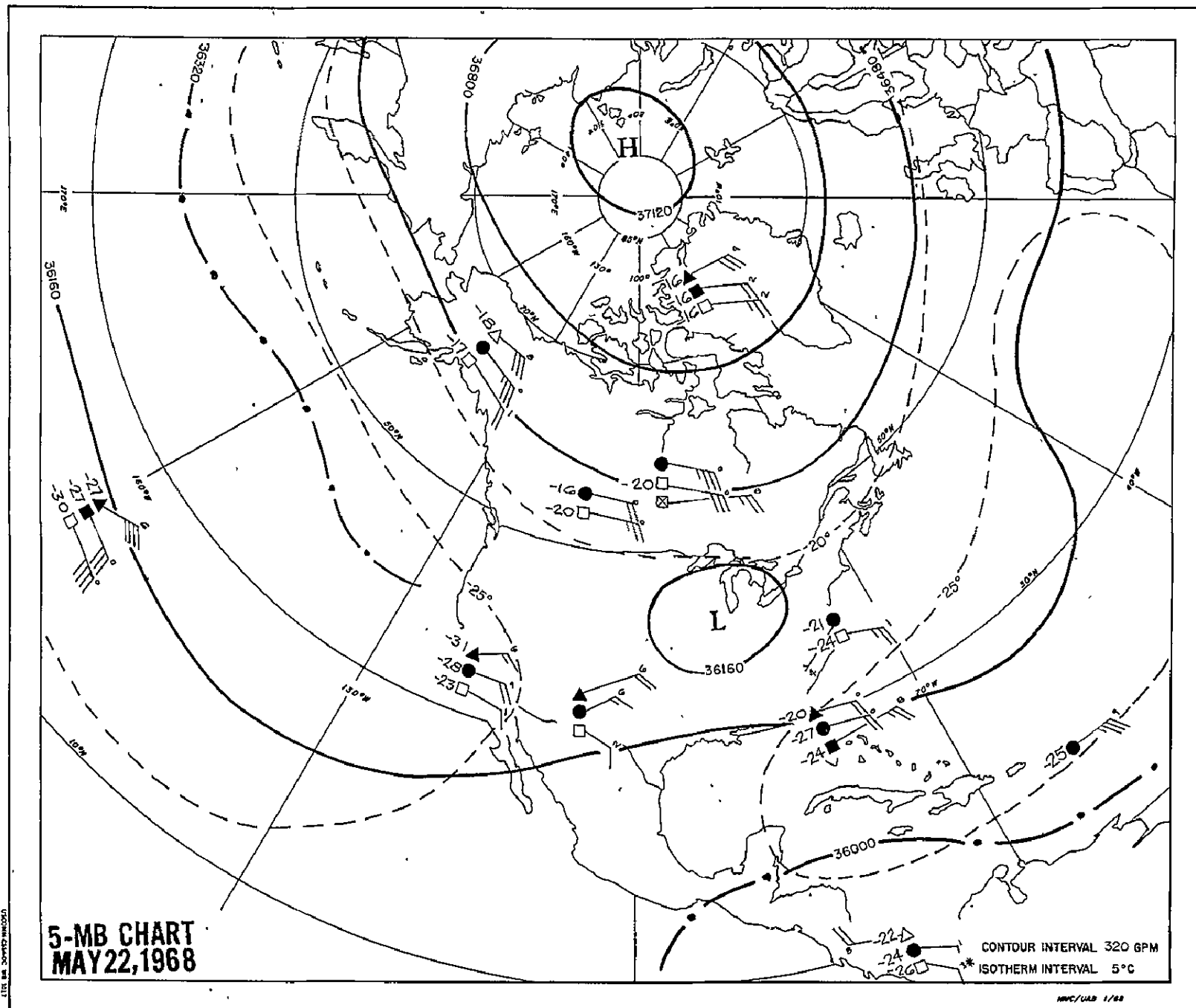


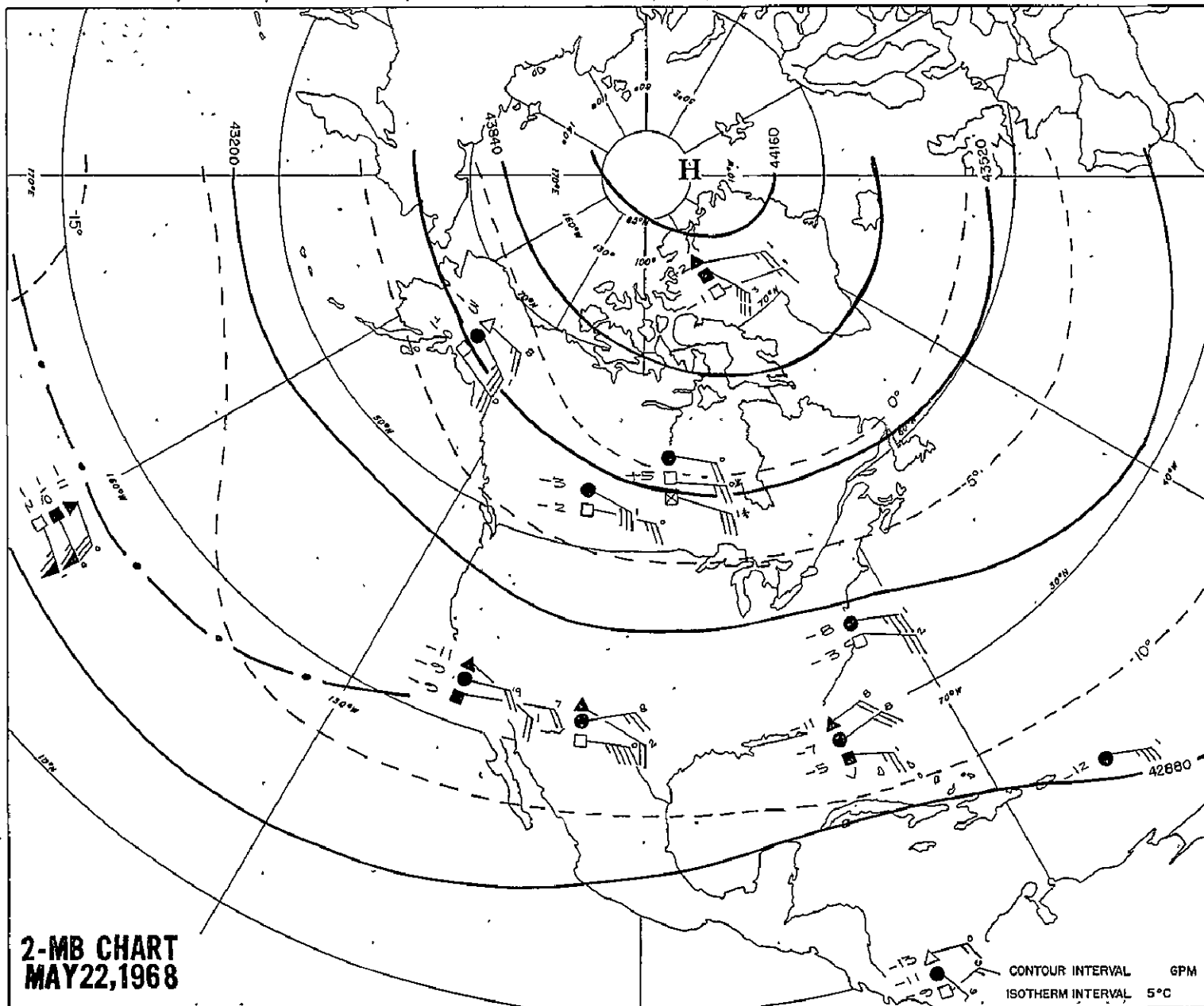






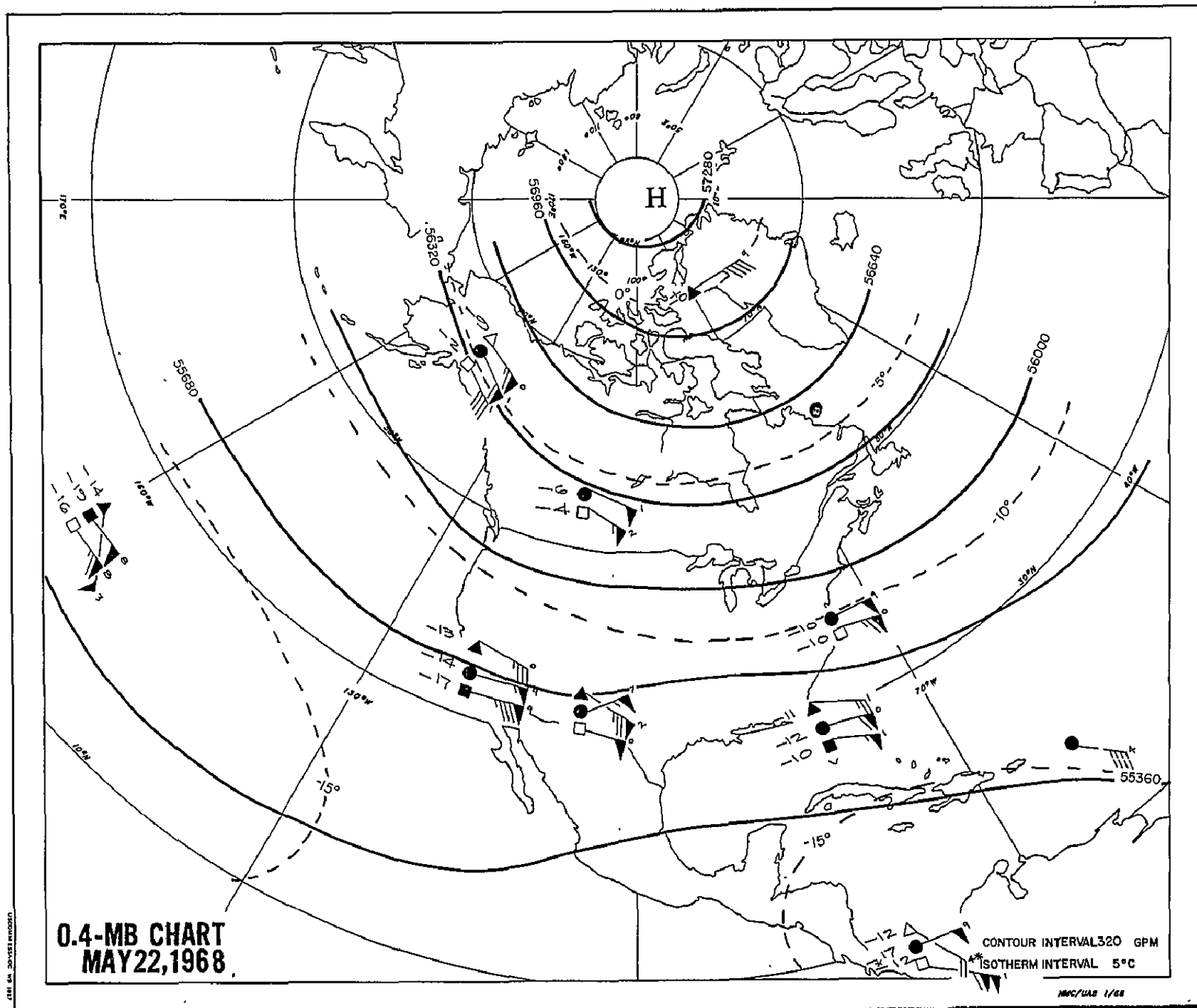




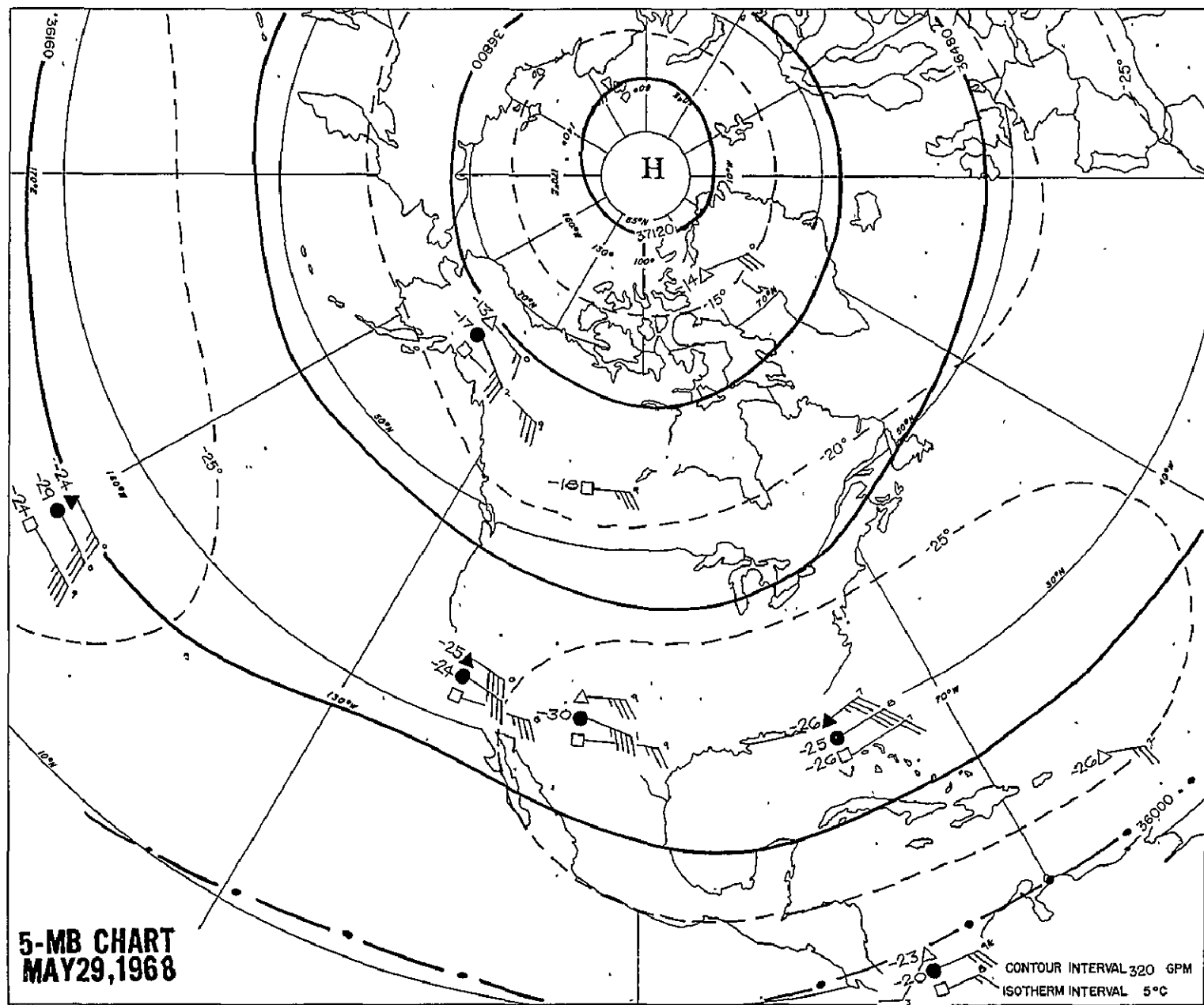


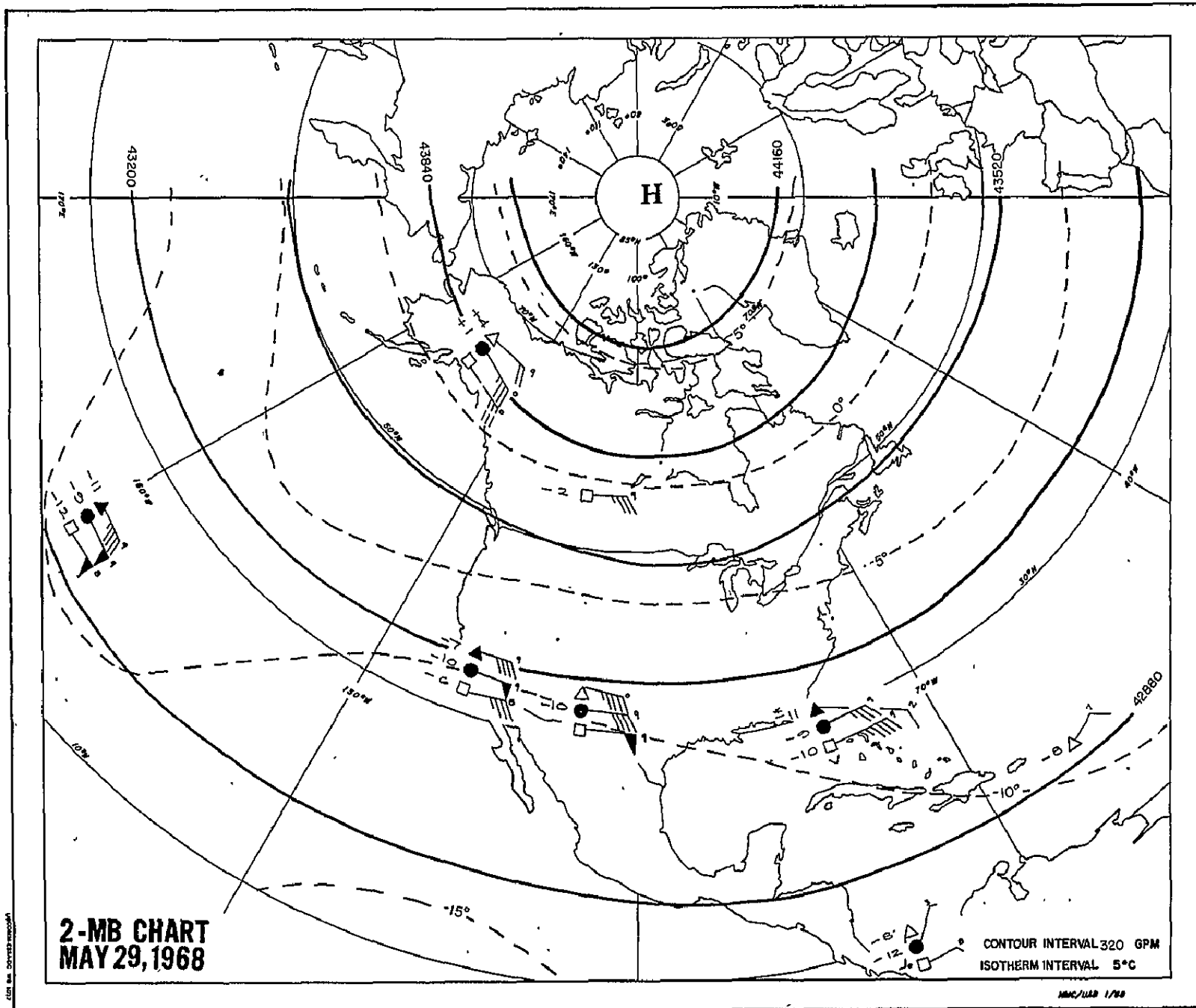
U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1968

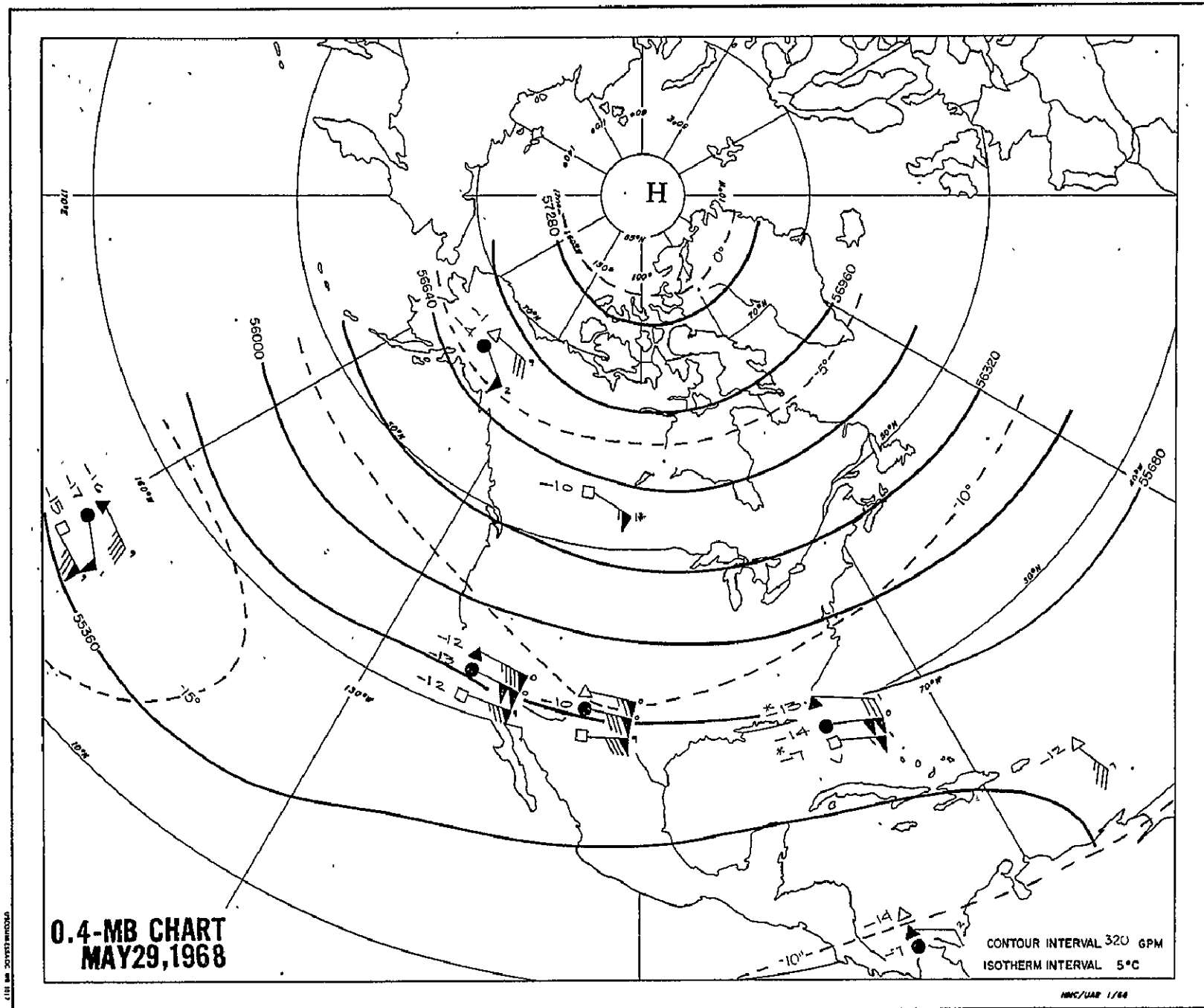
MM/C/LAB 1/68



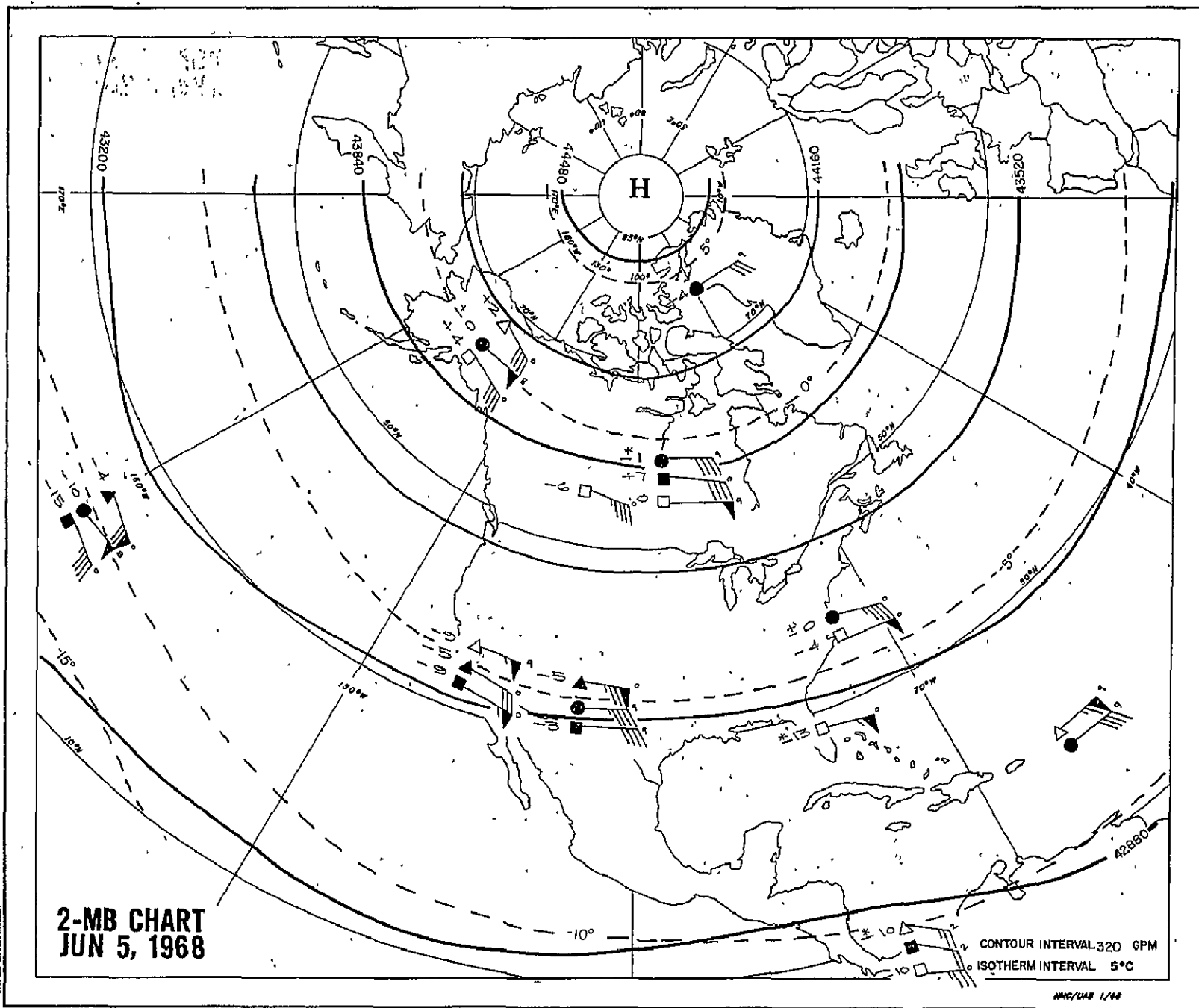


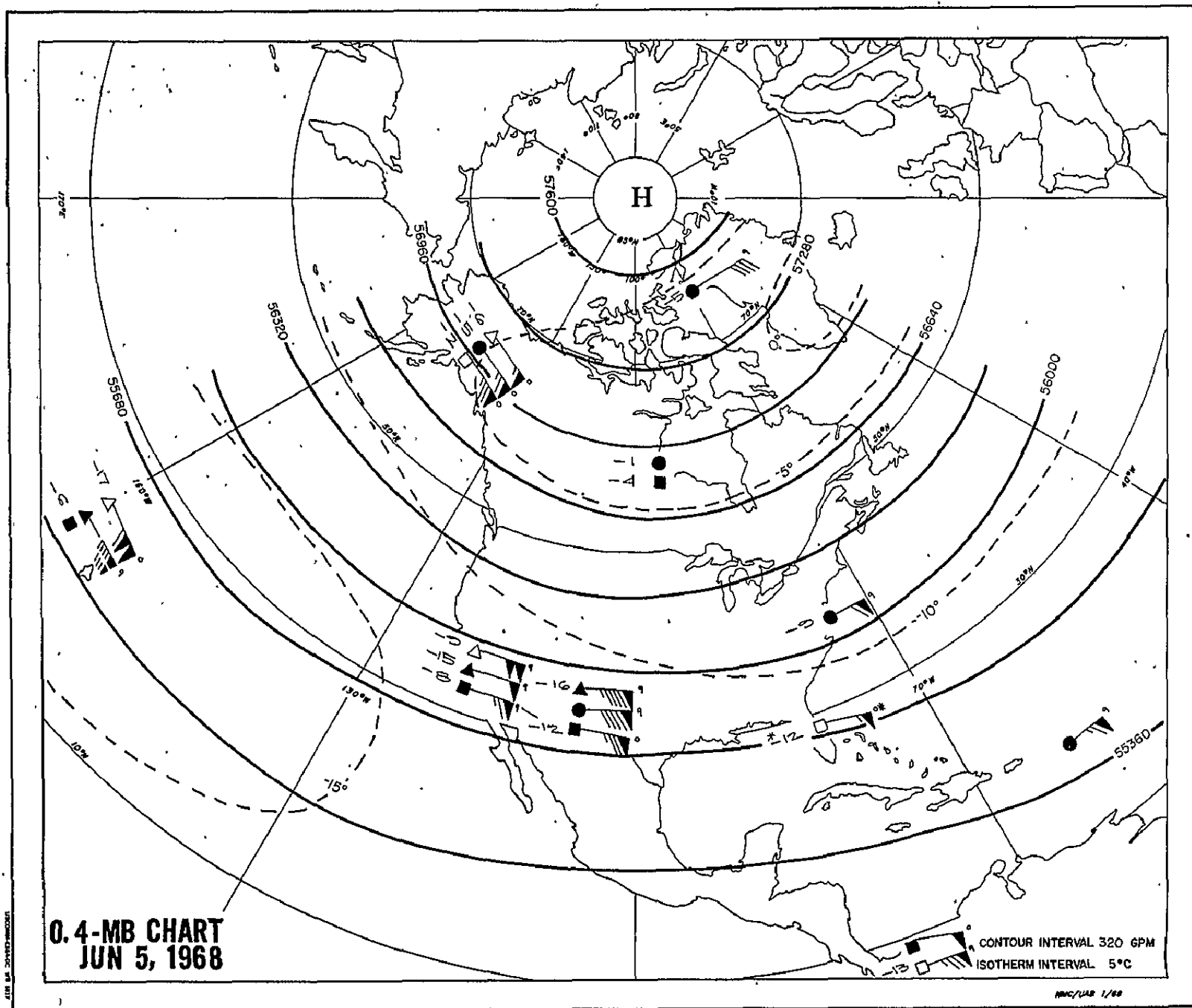


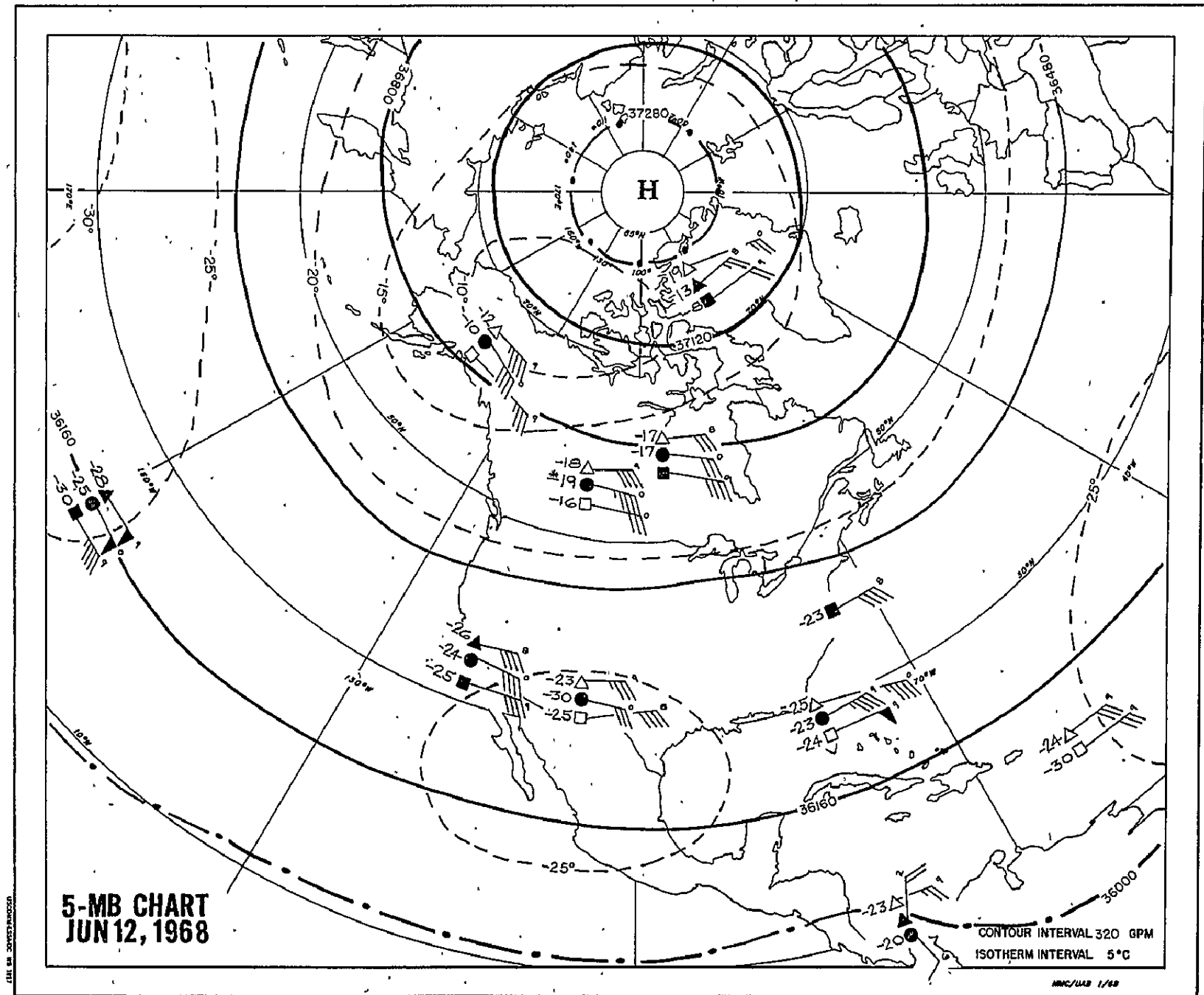


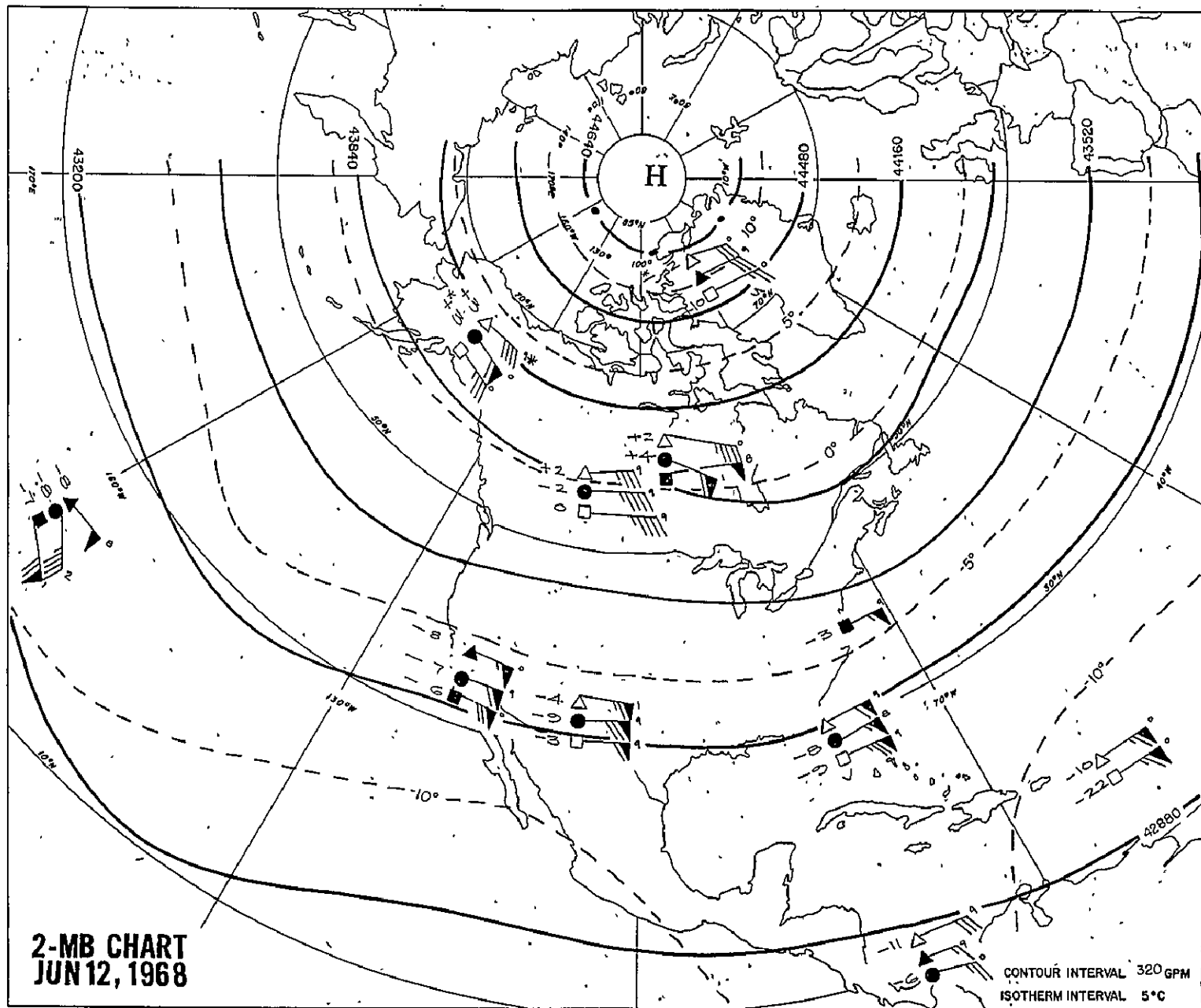








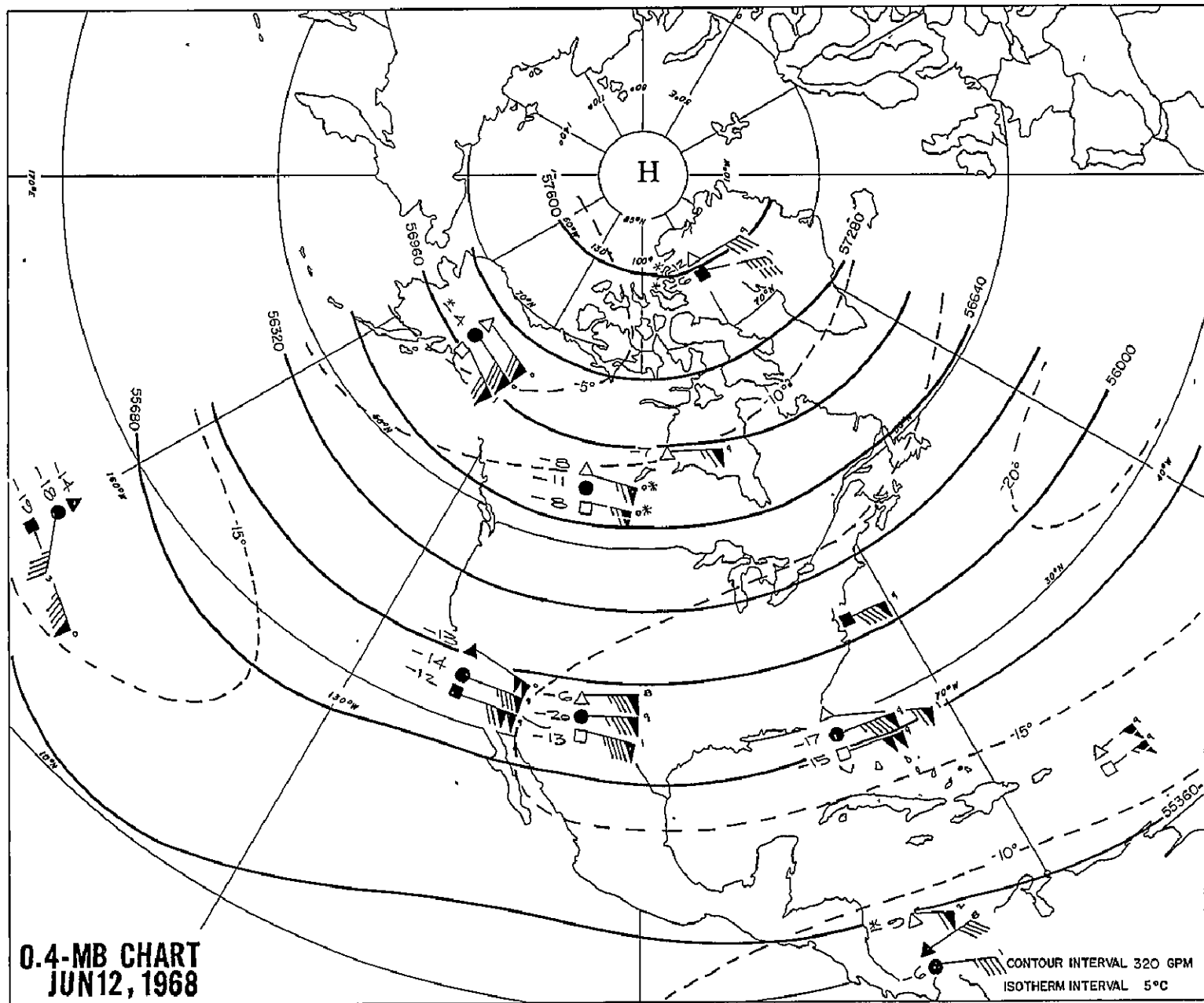




NOAA/USAR 1/68

NOAA/USAR 1/68

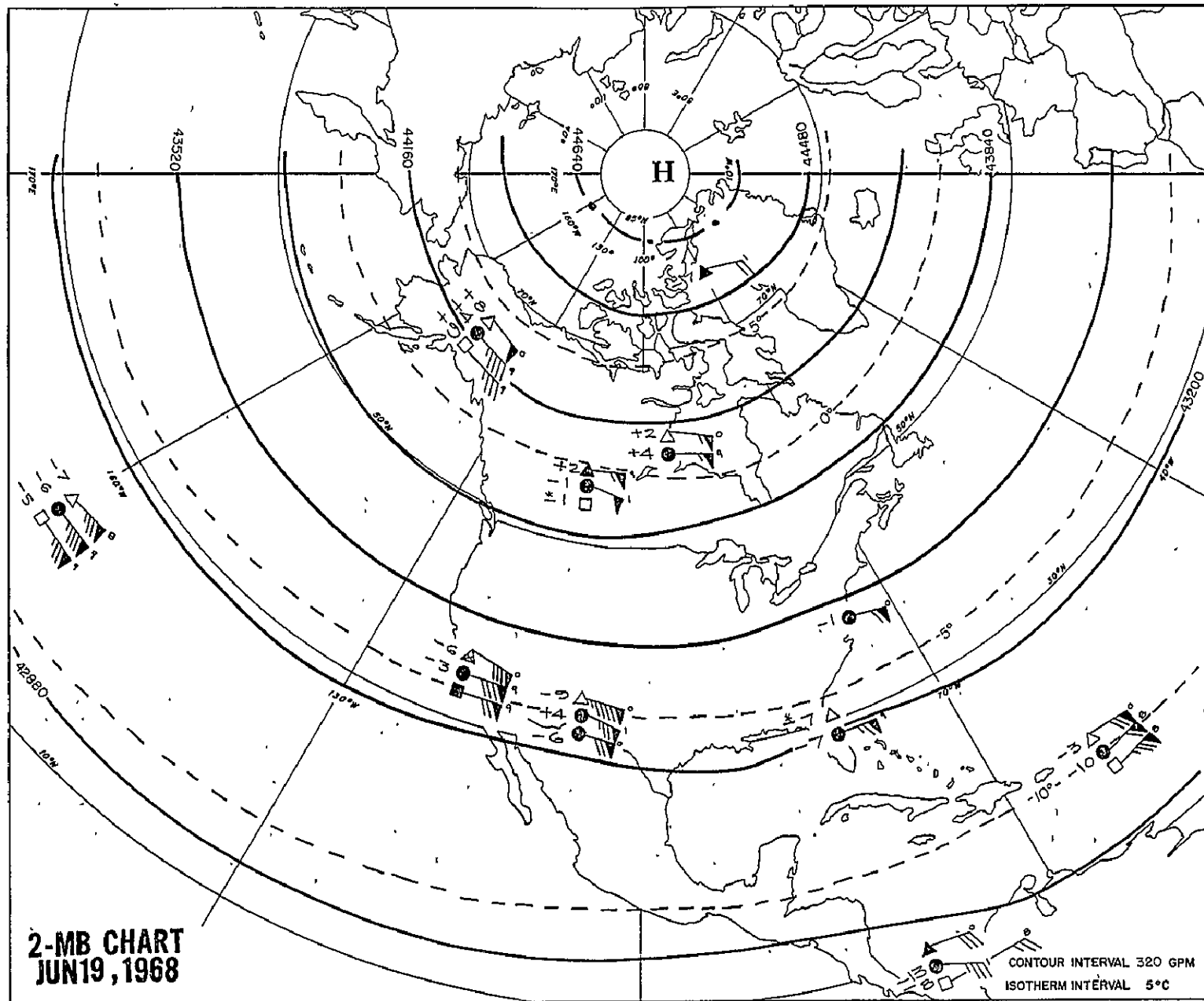




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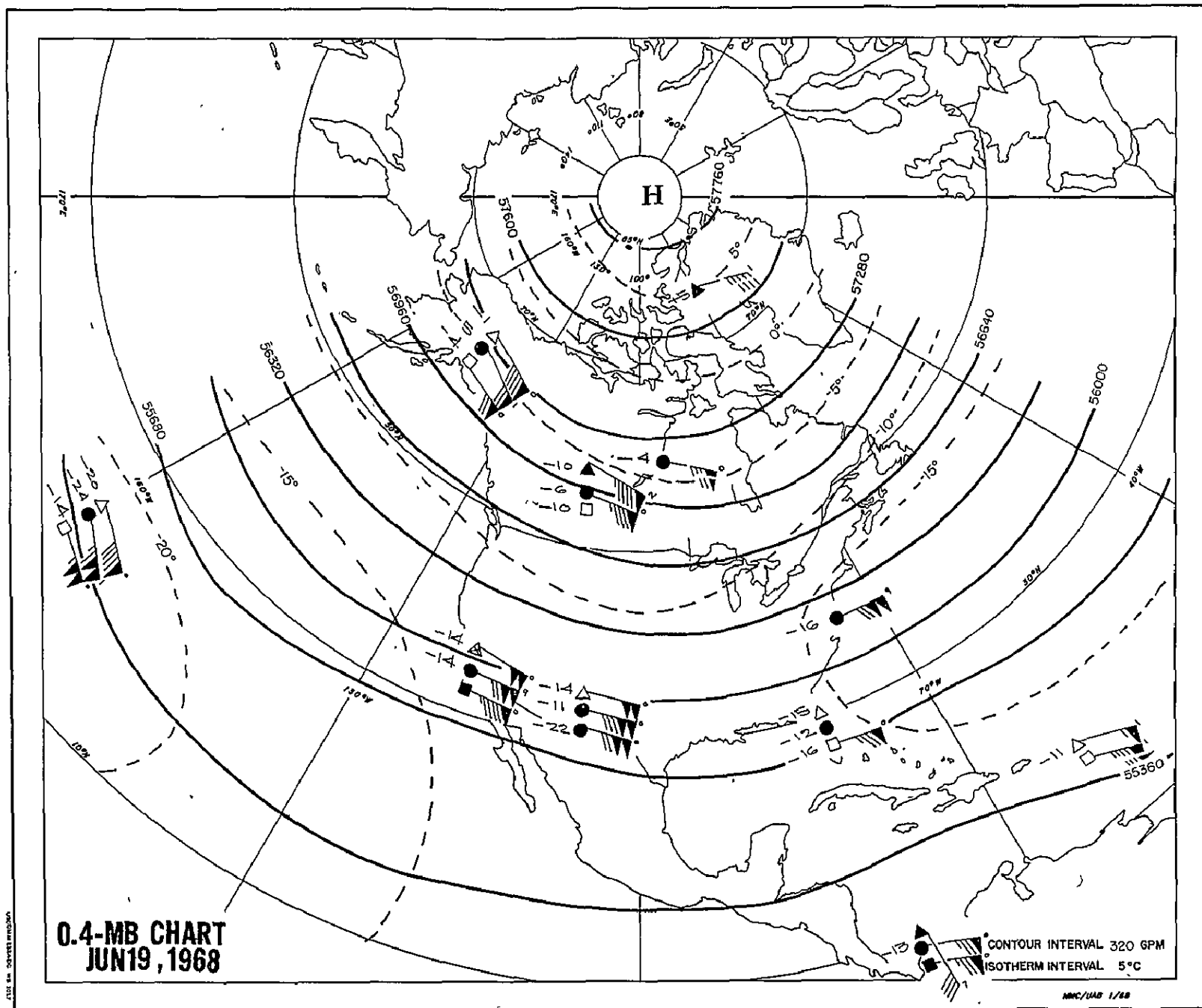
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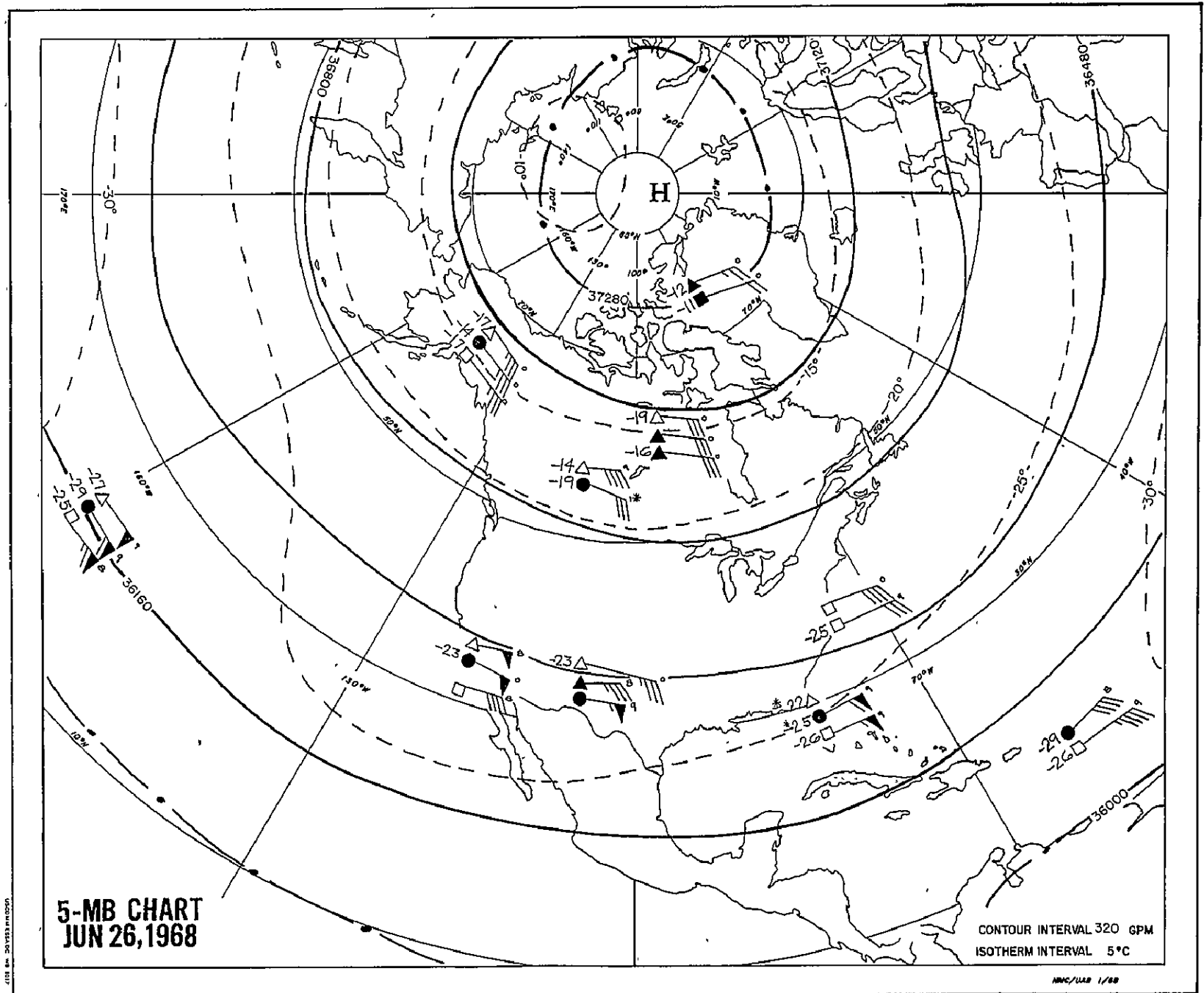




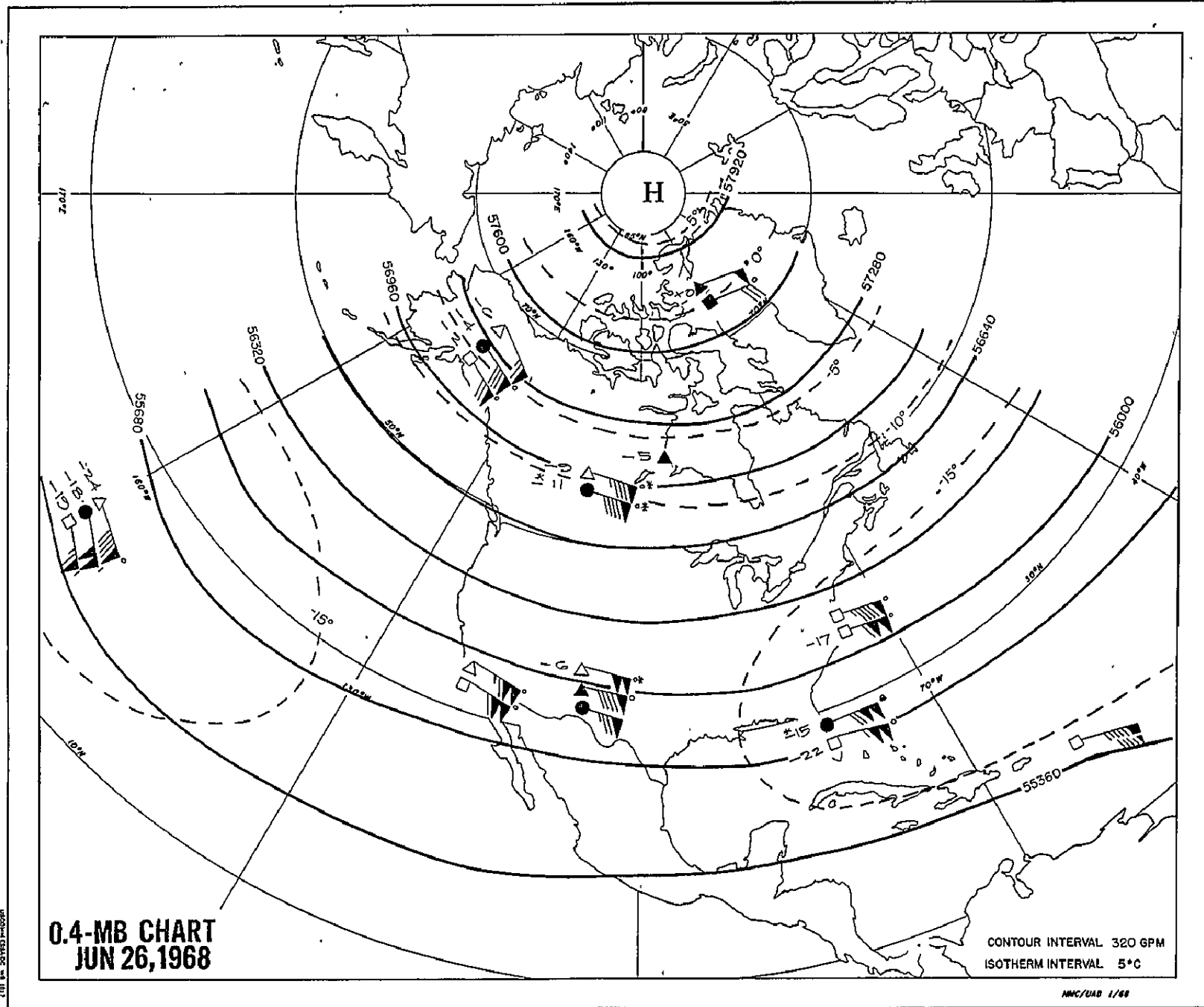
UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

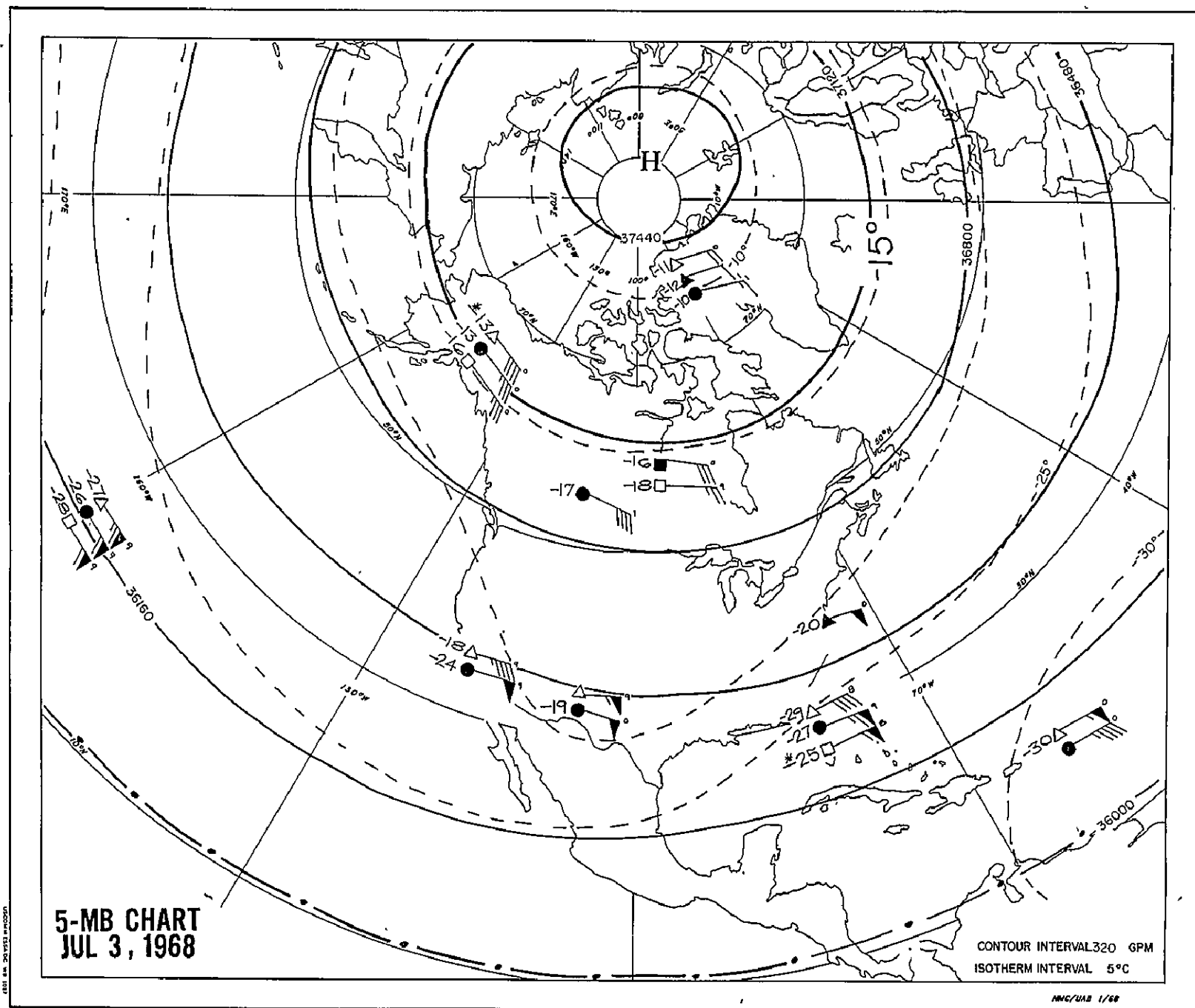
MHC/UAB 1/68





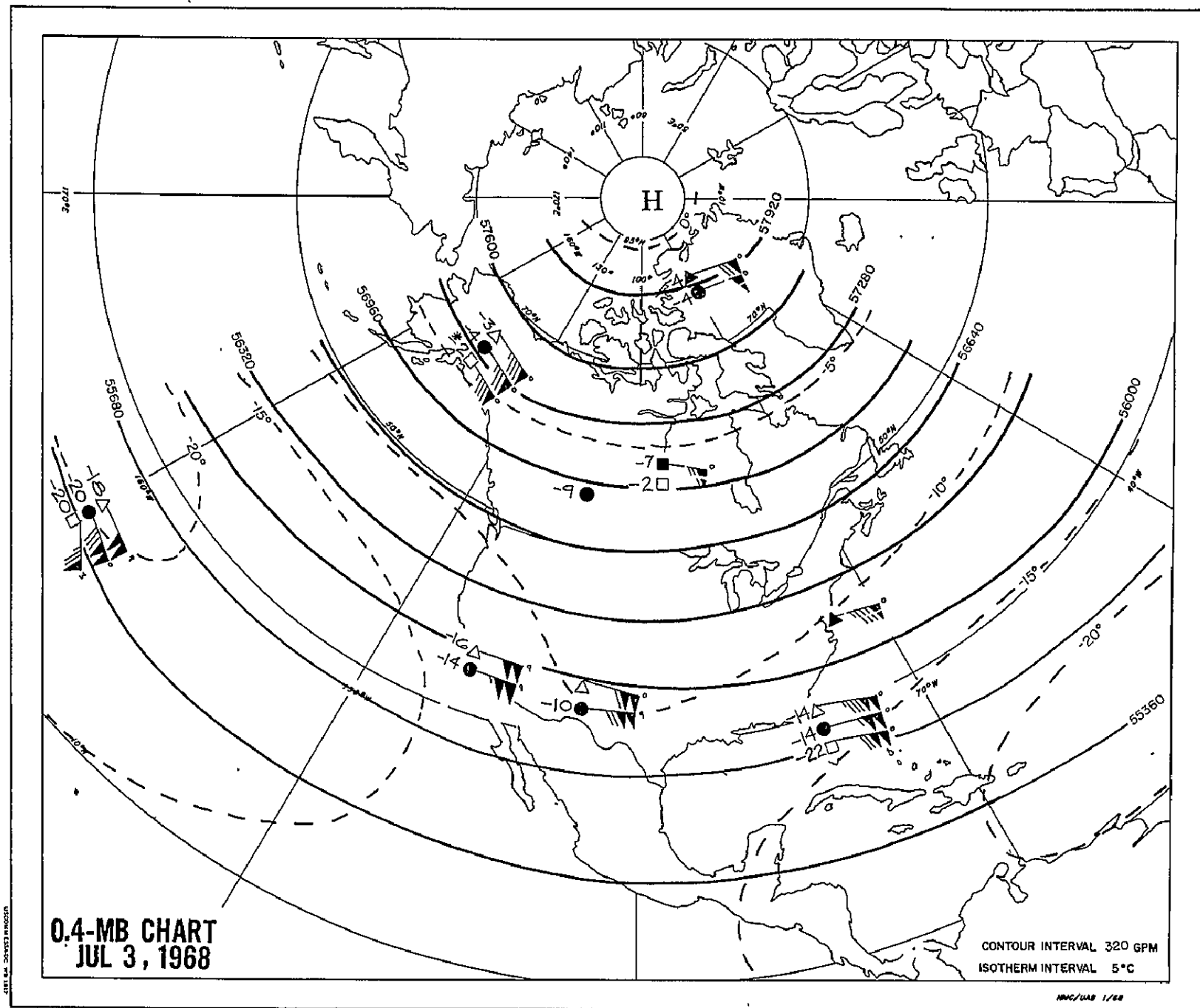


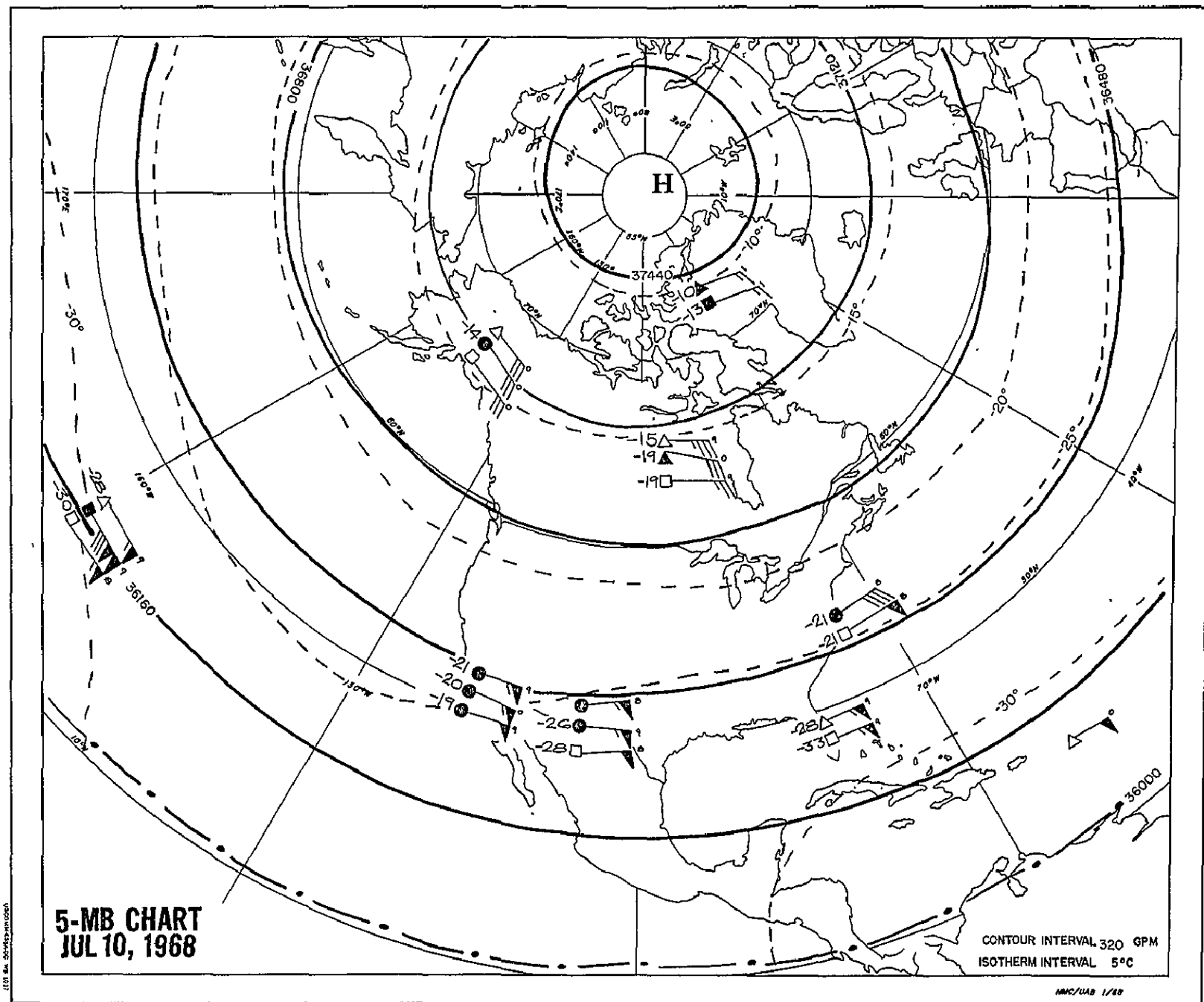


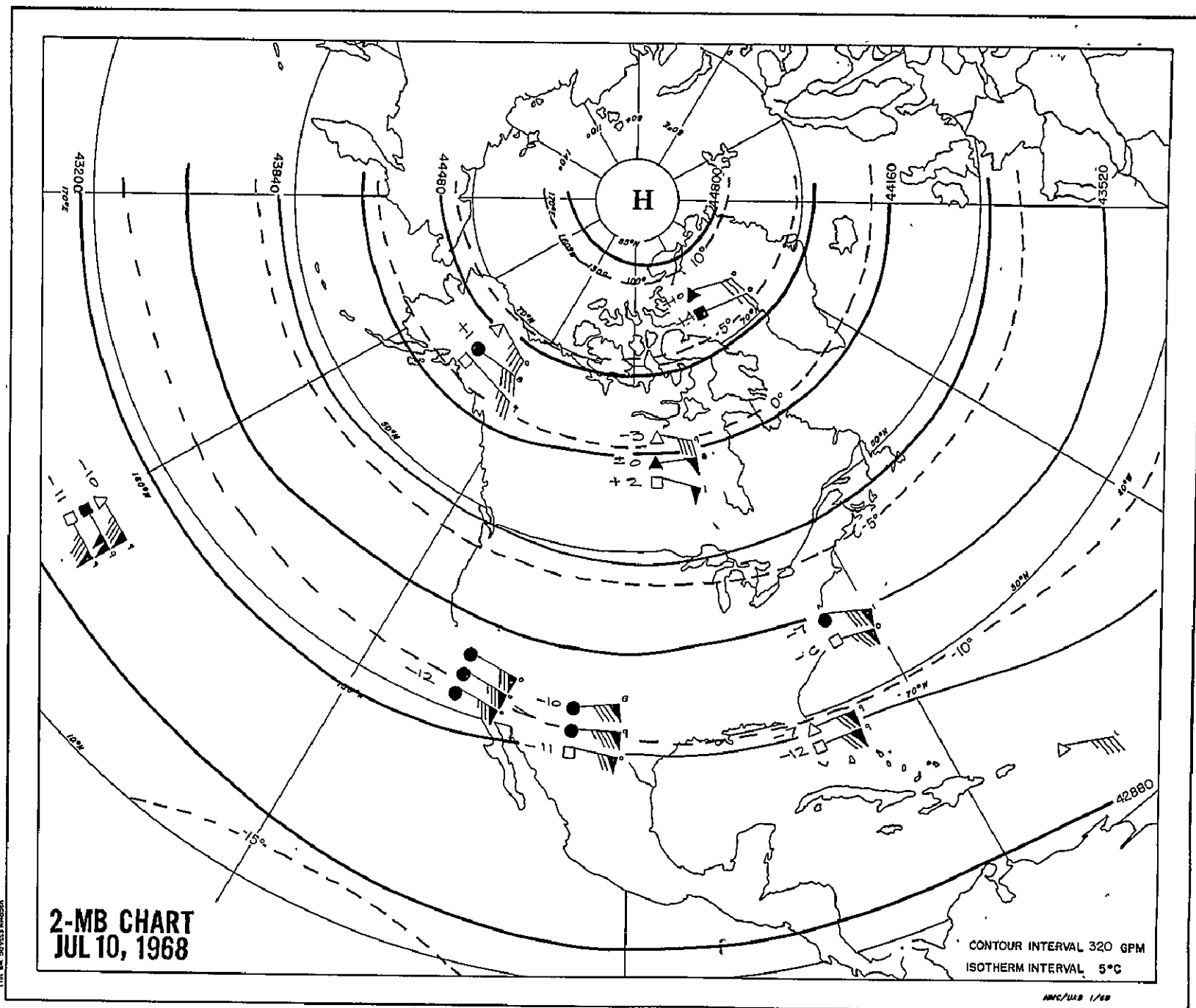




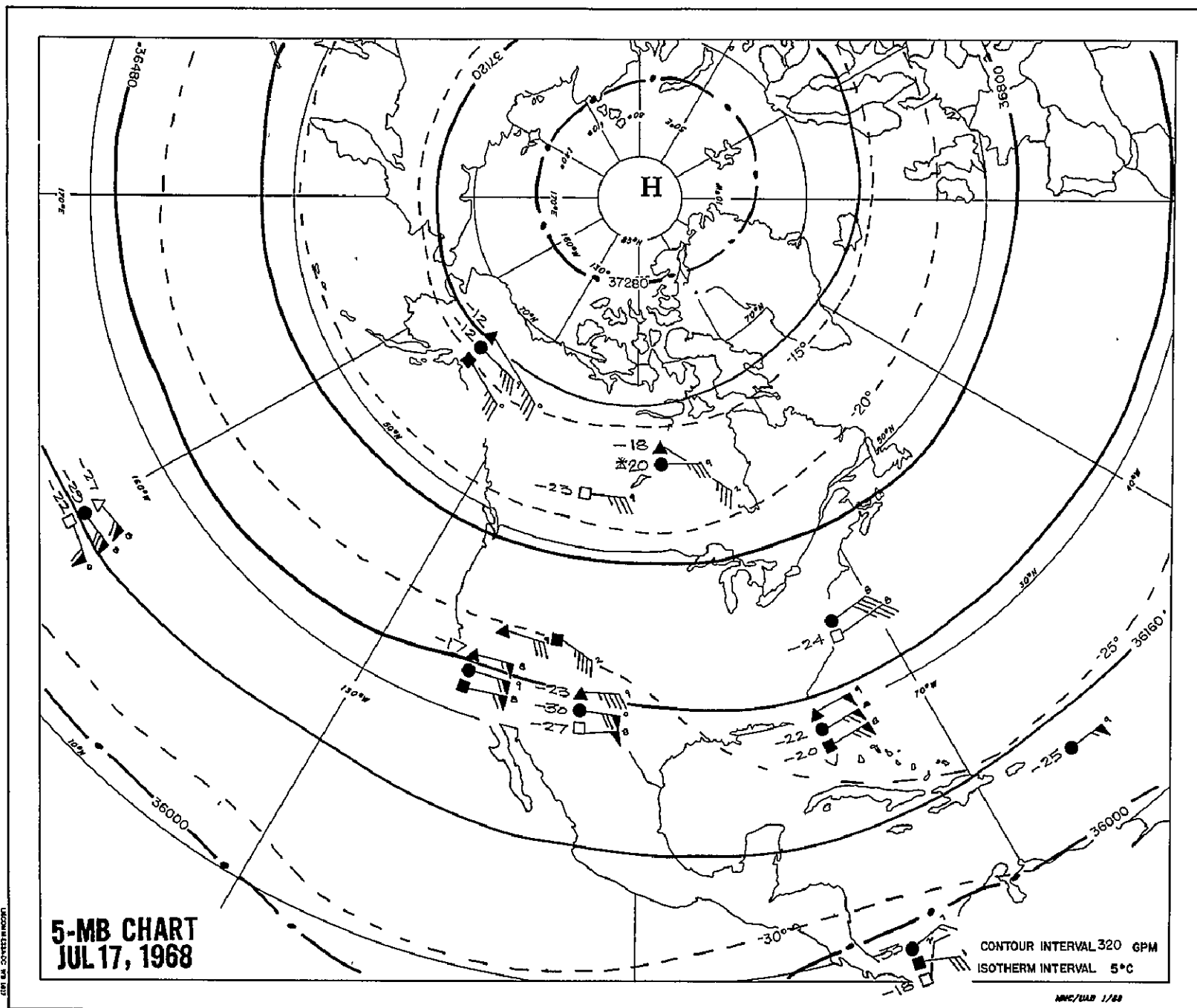


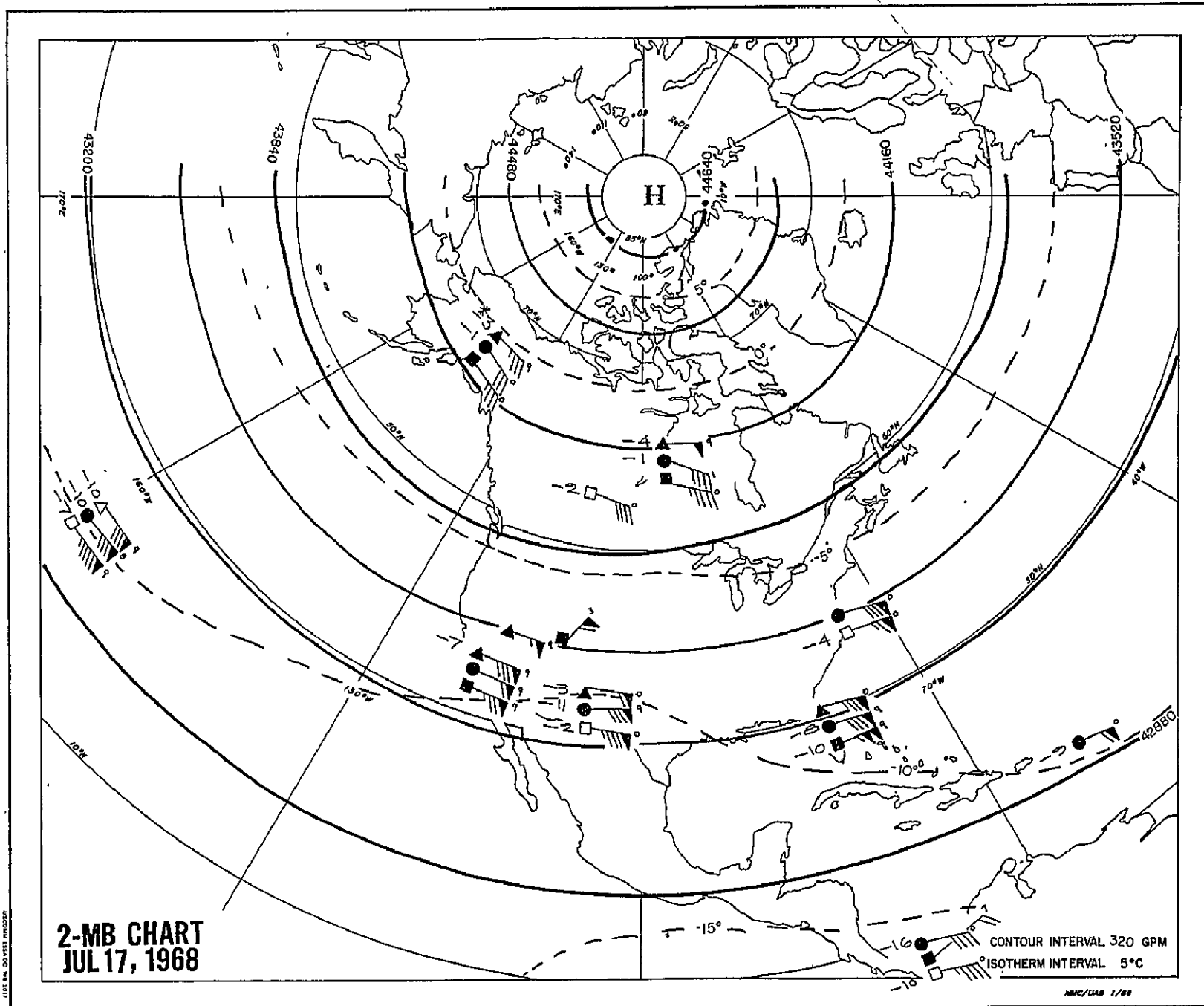


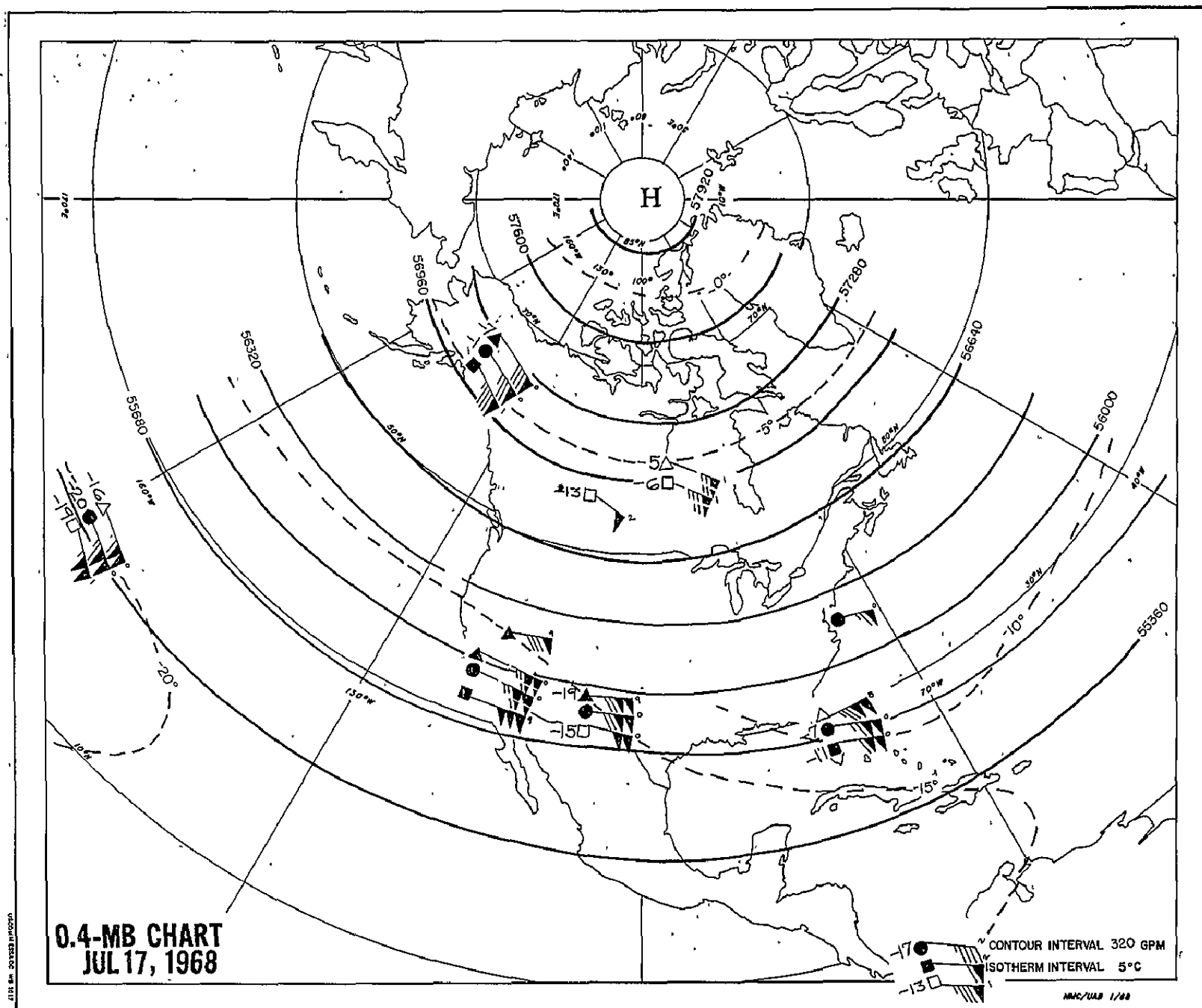




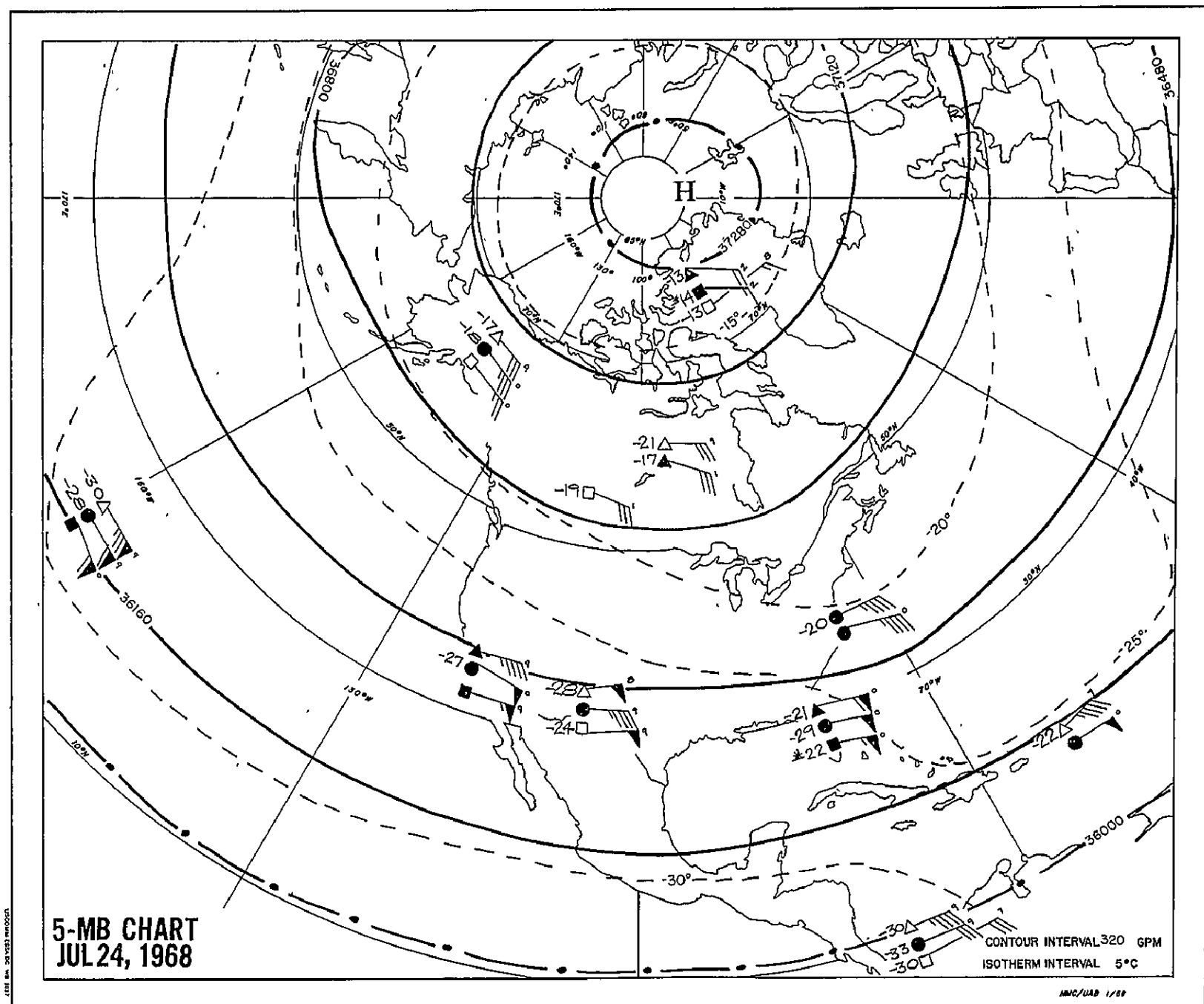




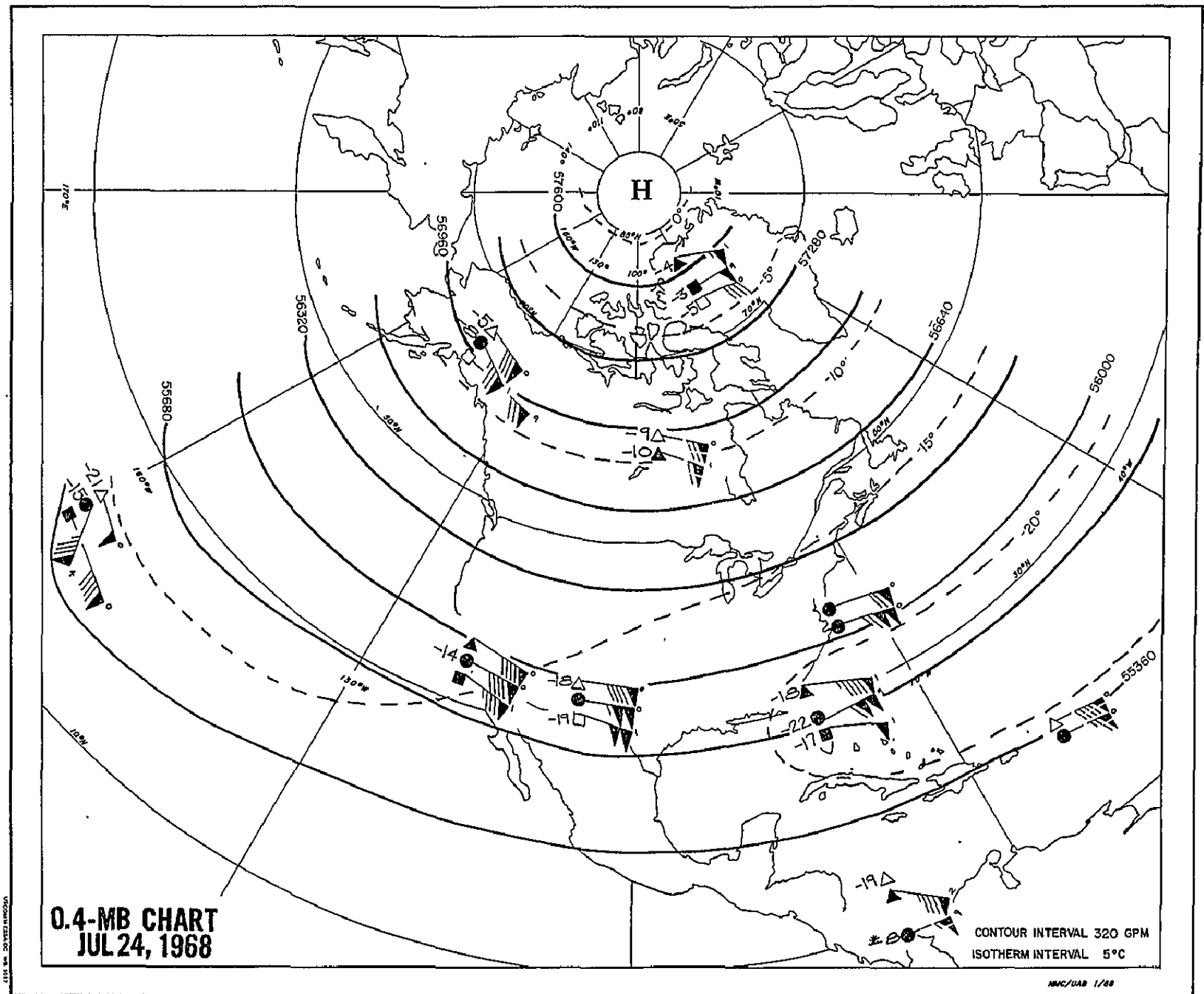




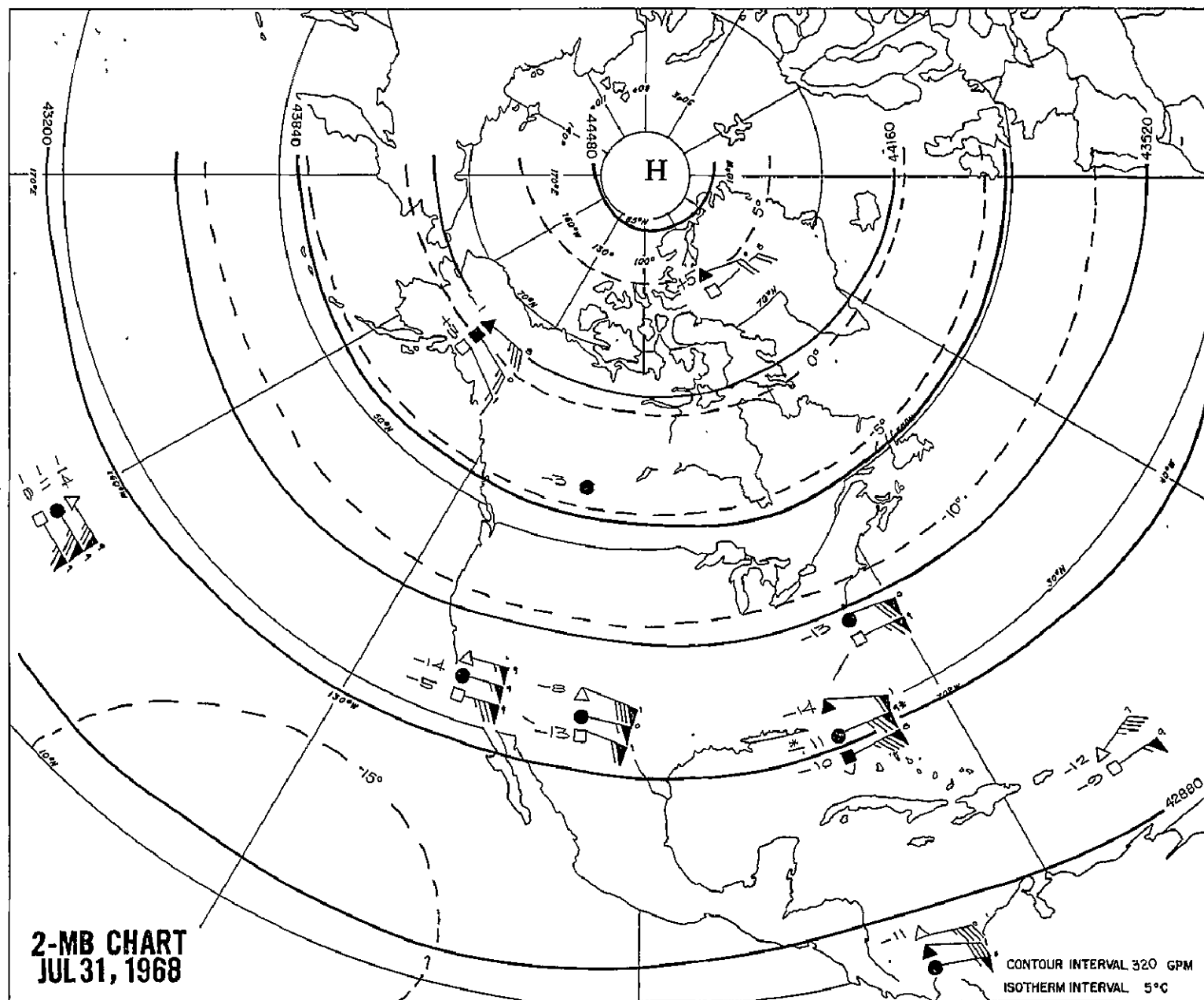




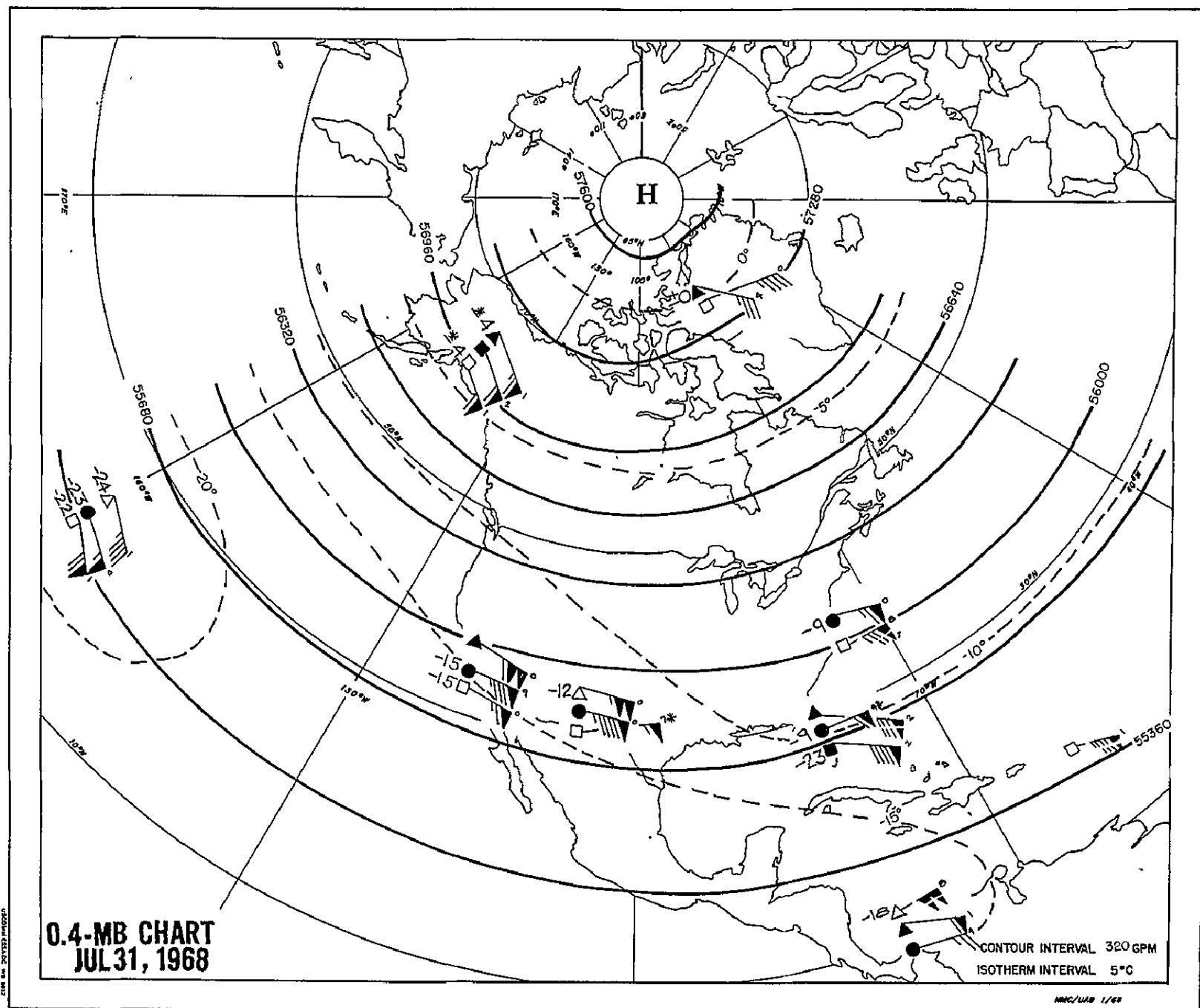




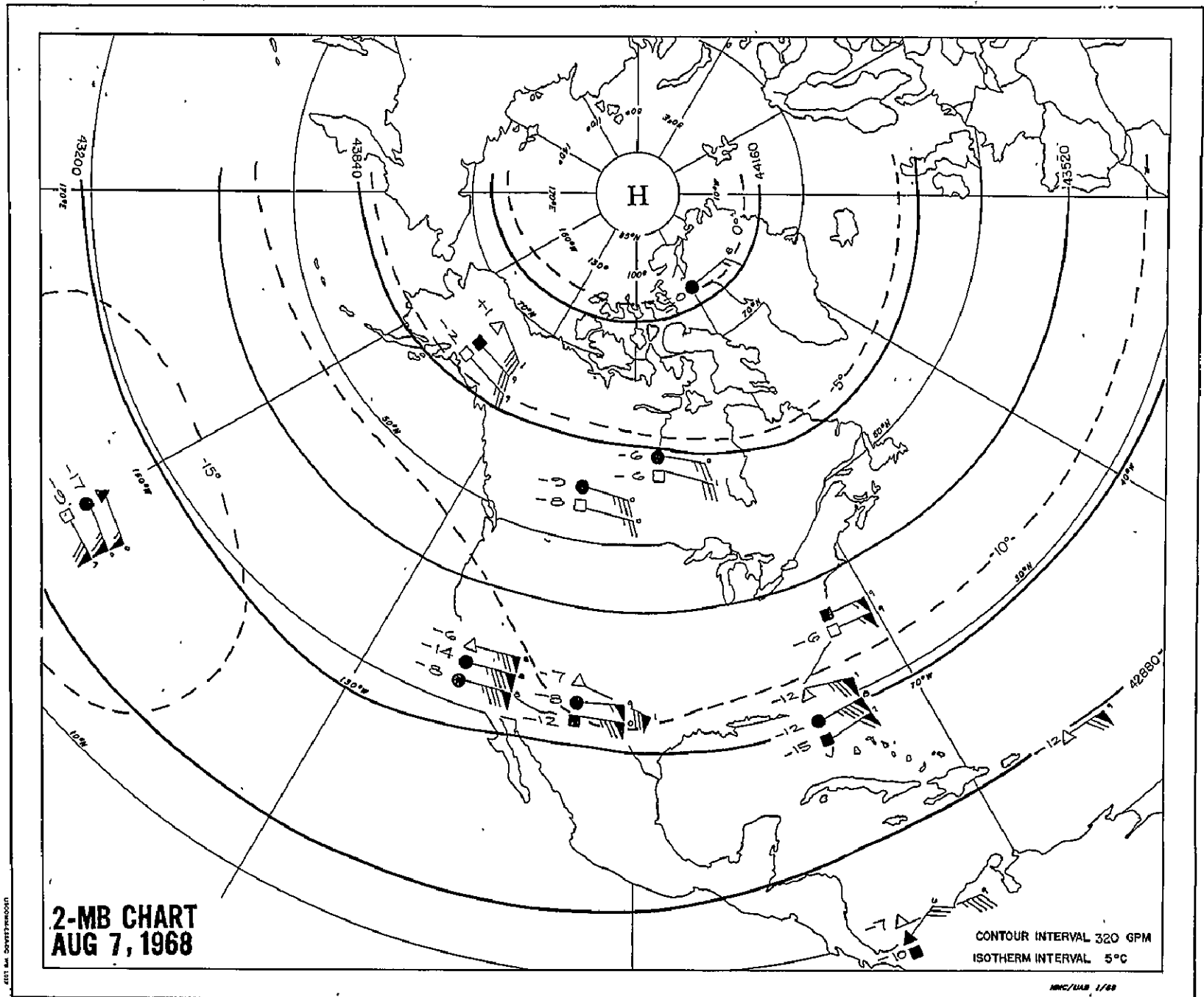




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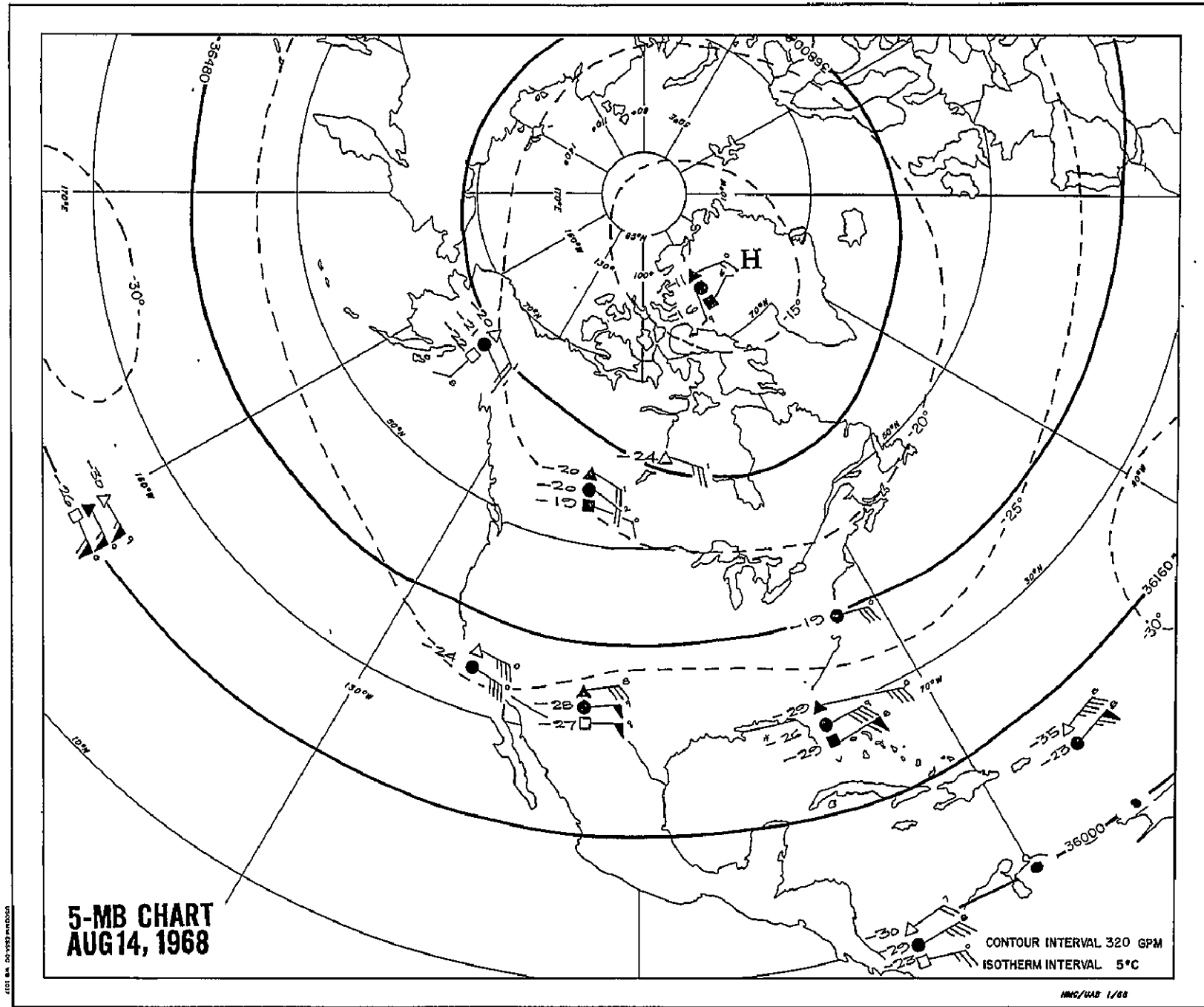


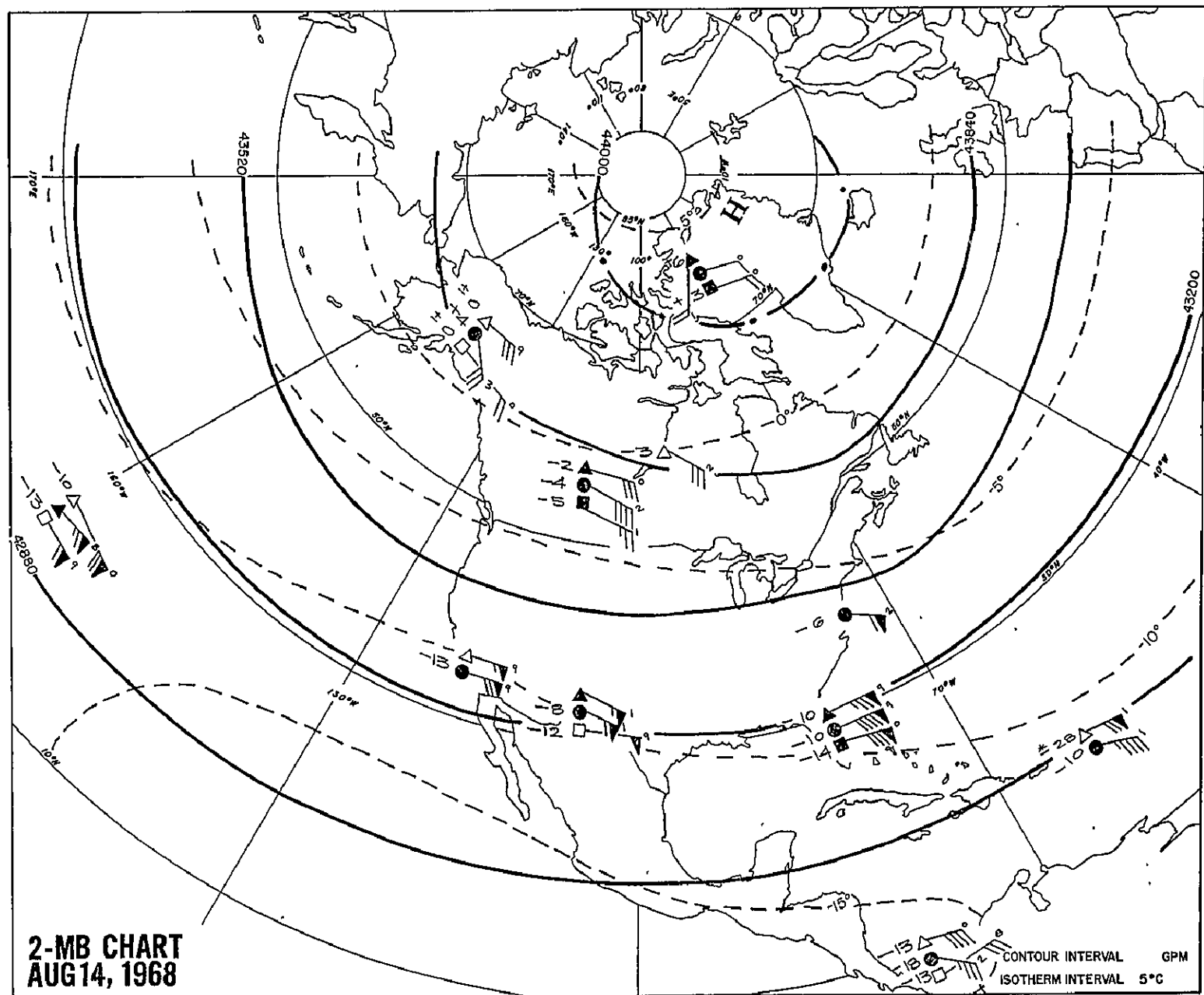


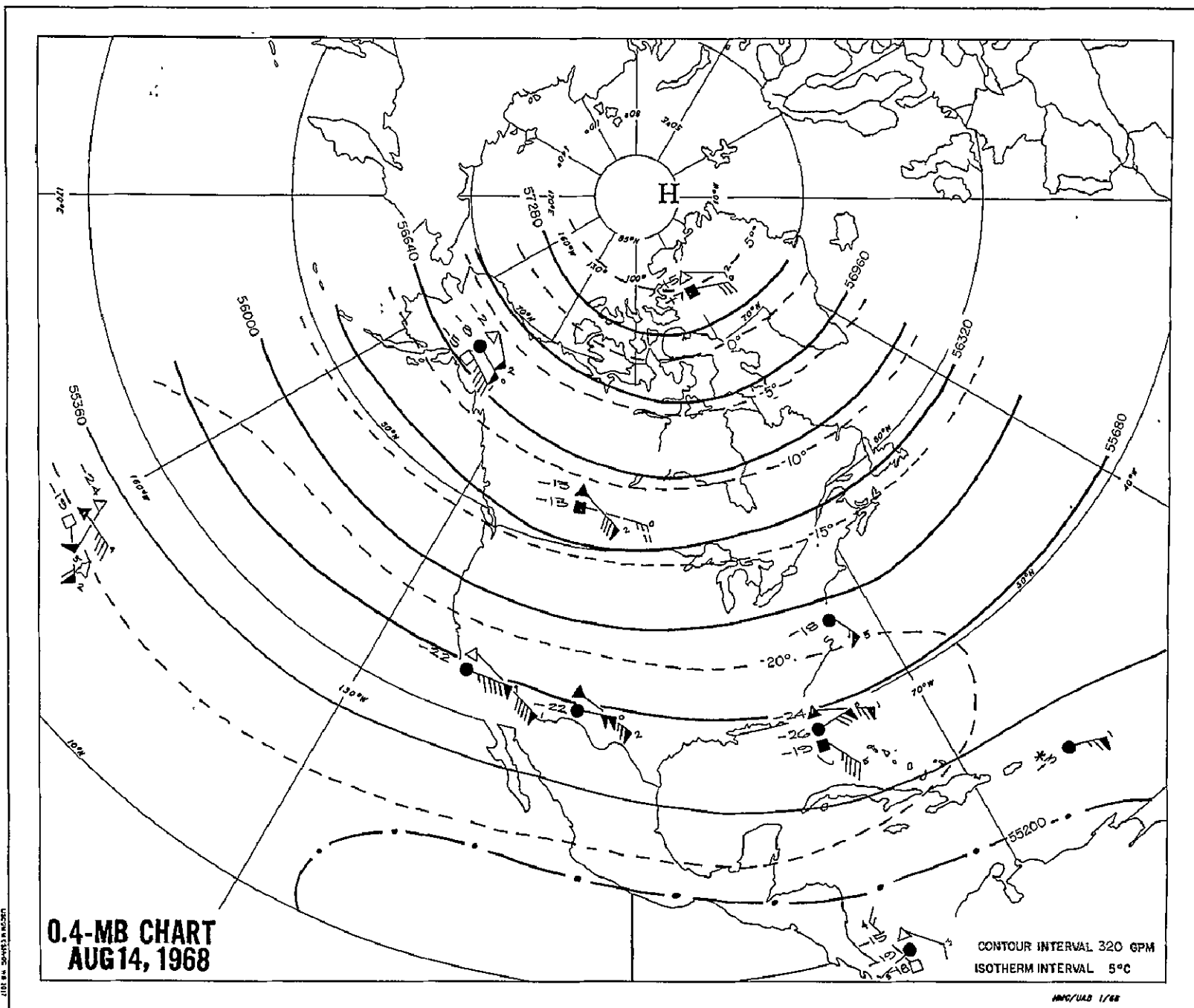


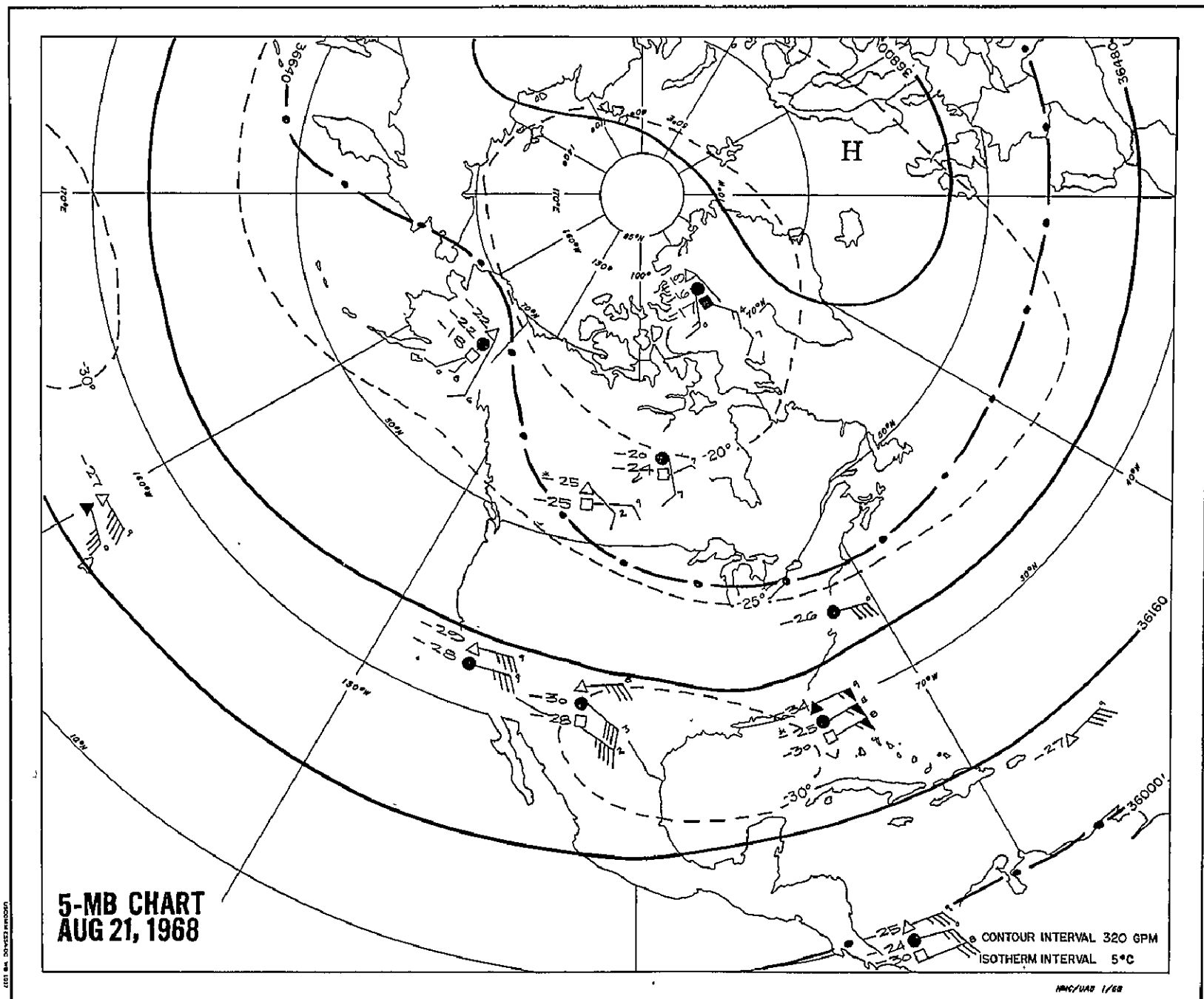


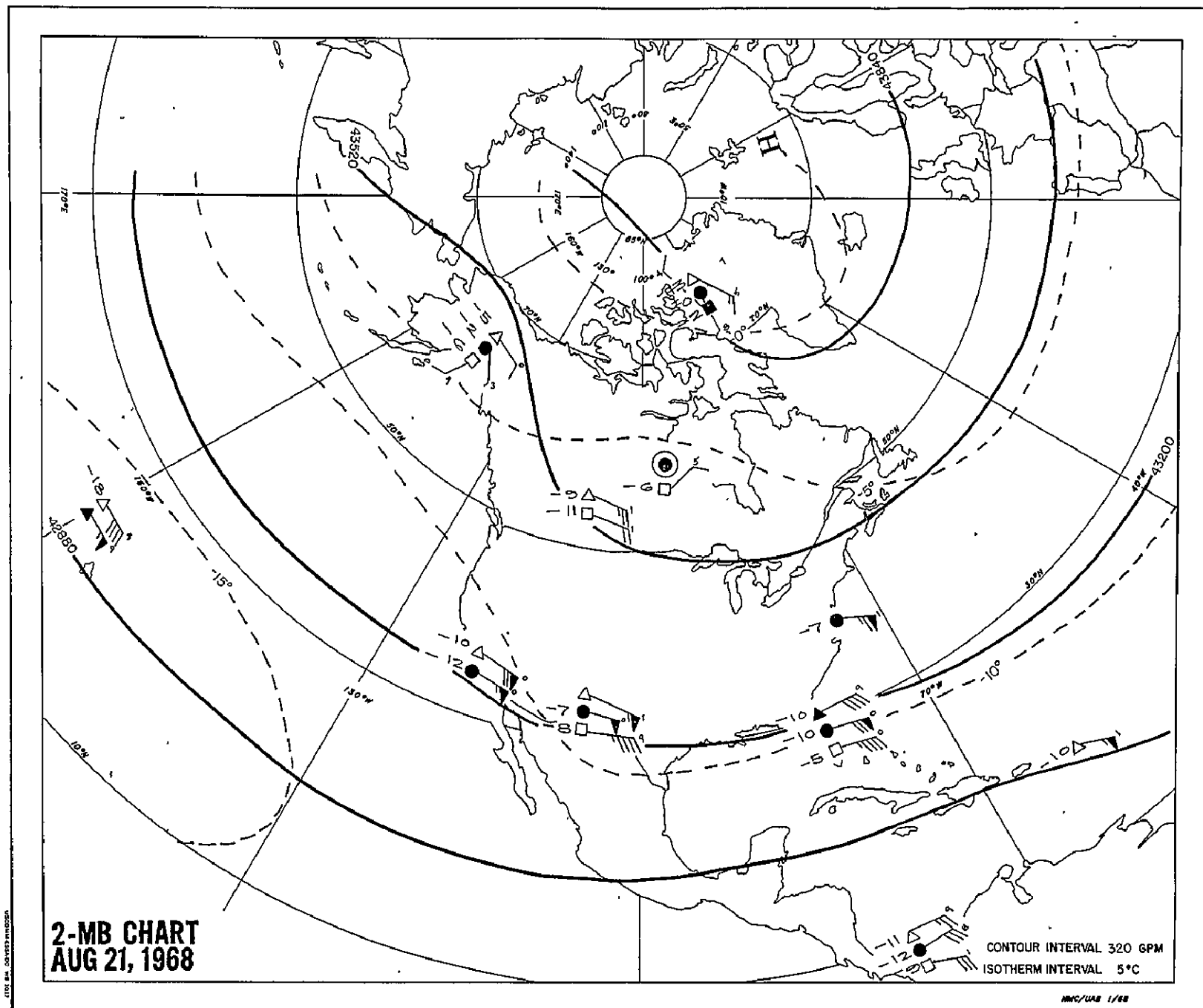


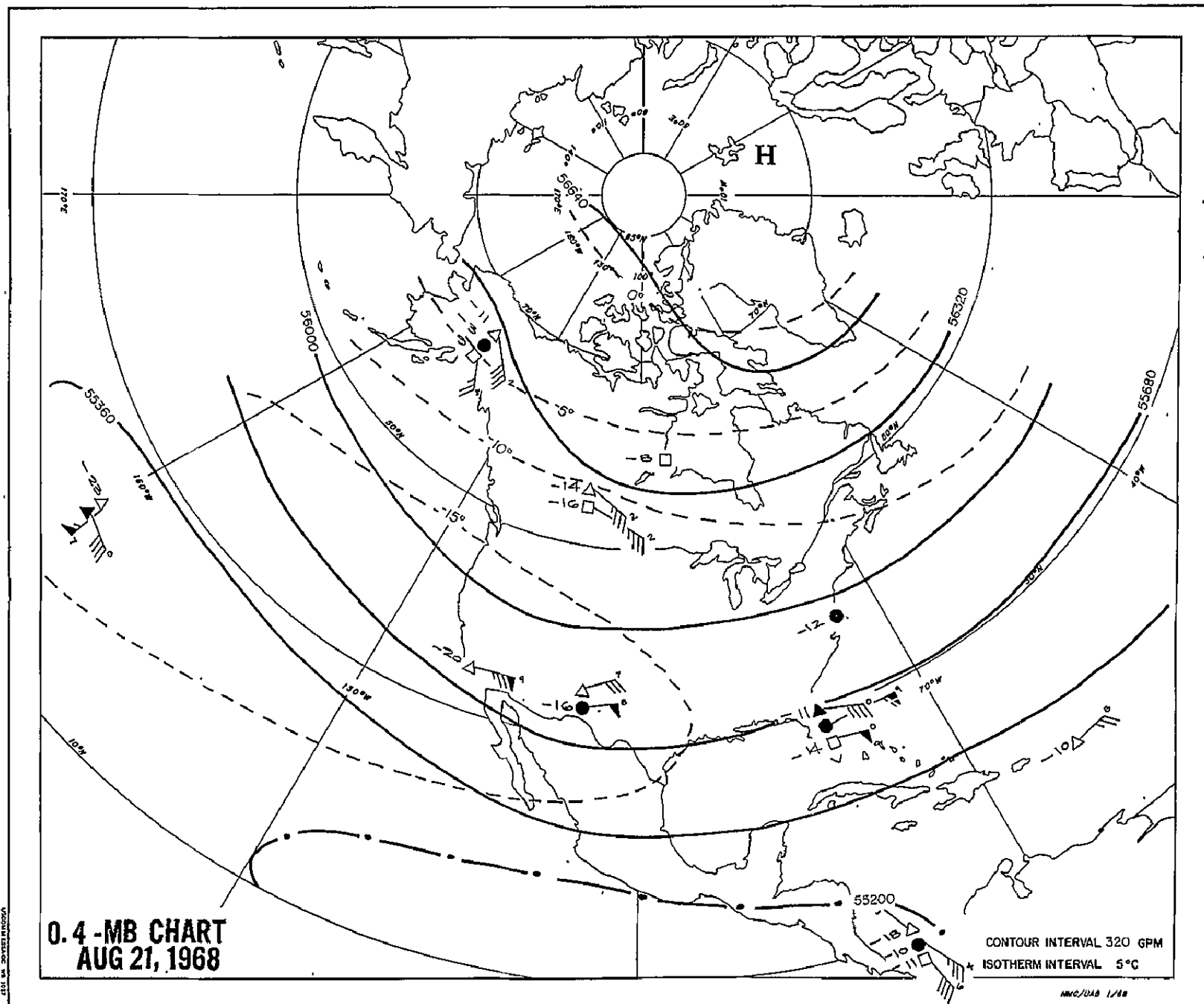


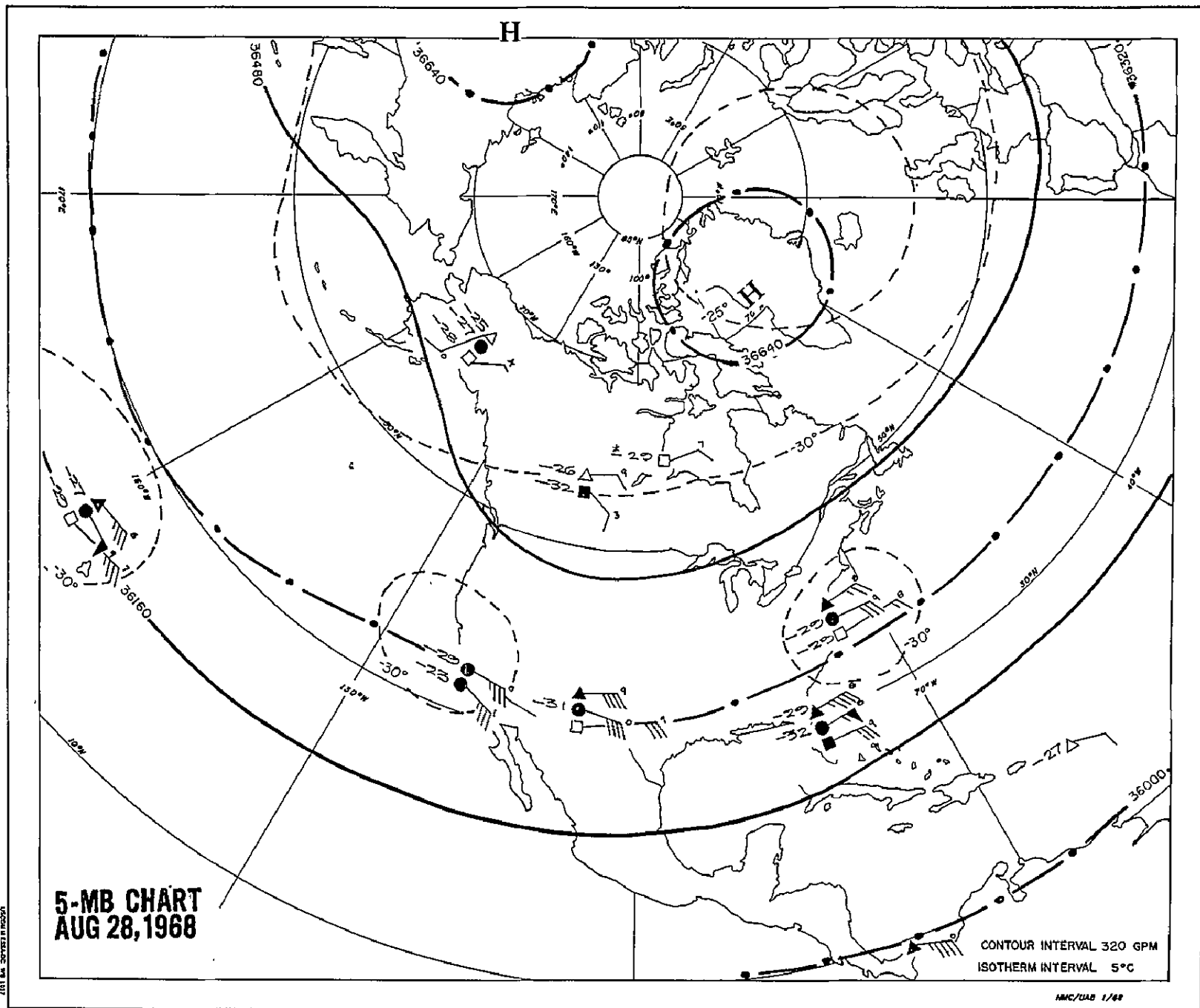




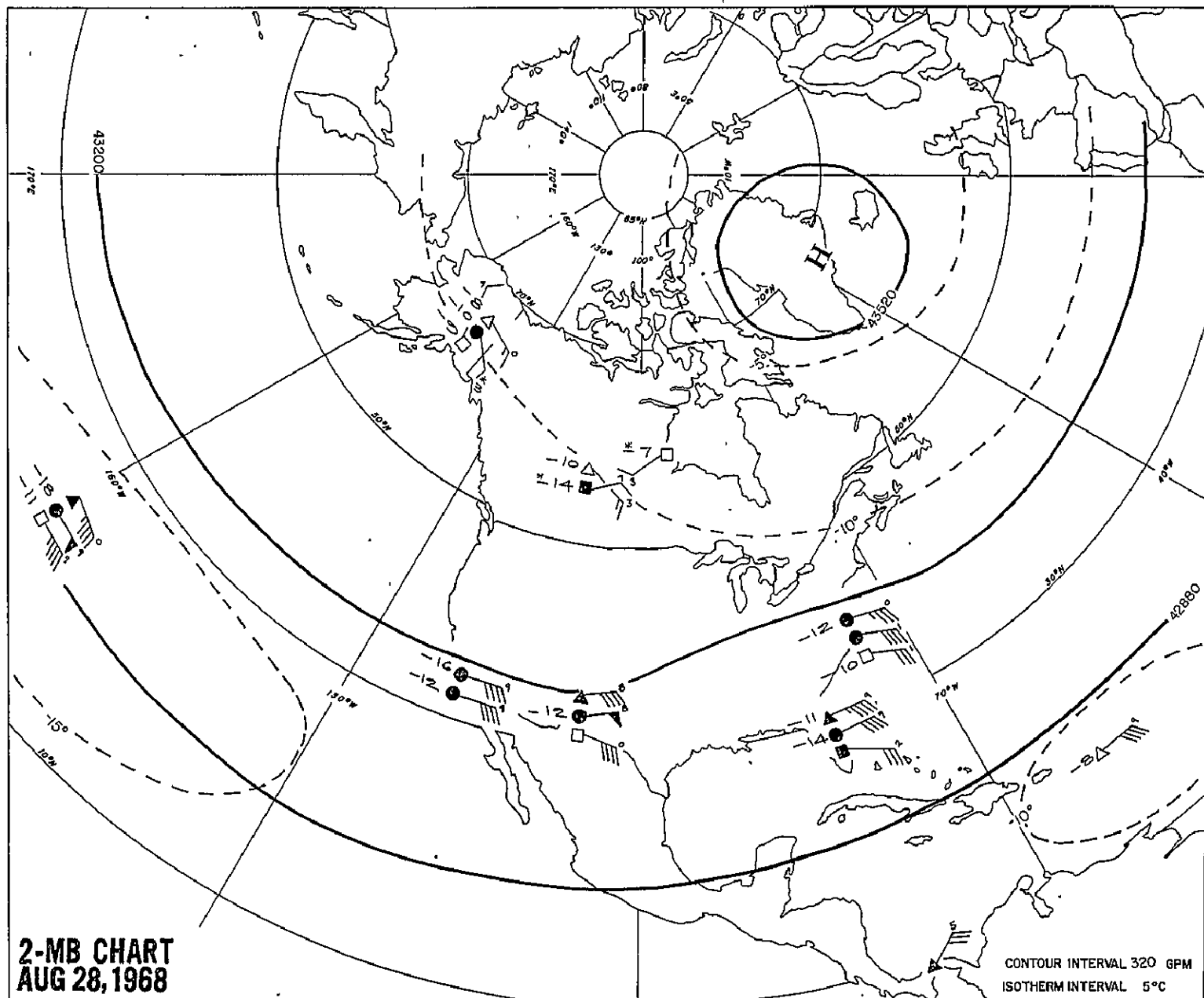


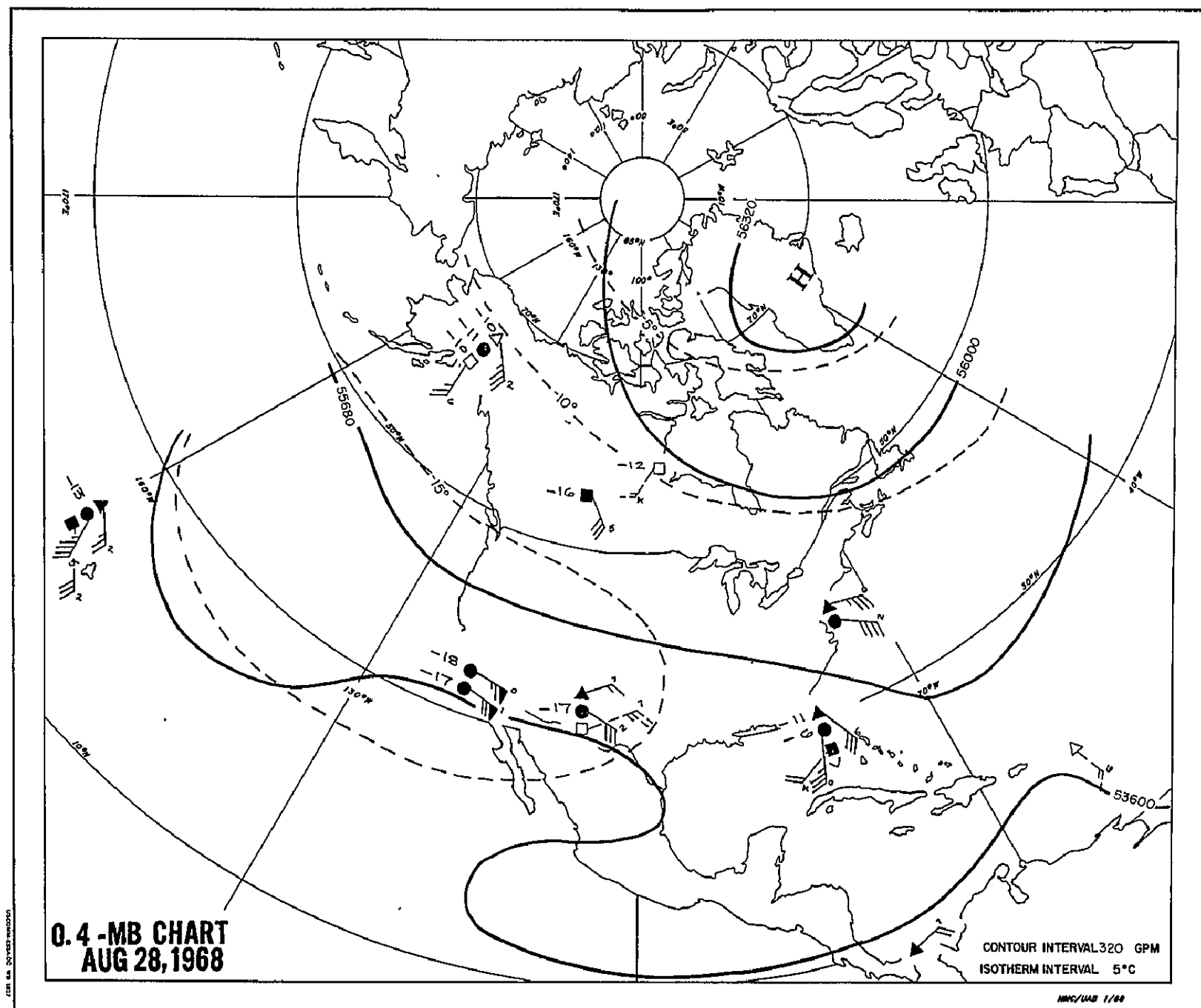


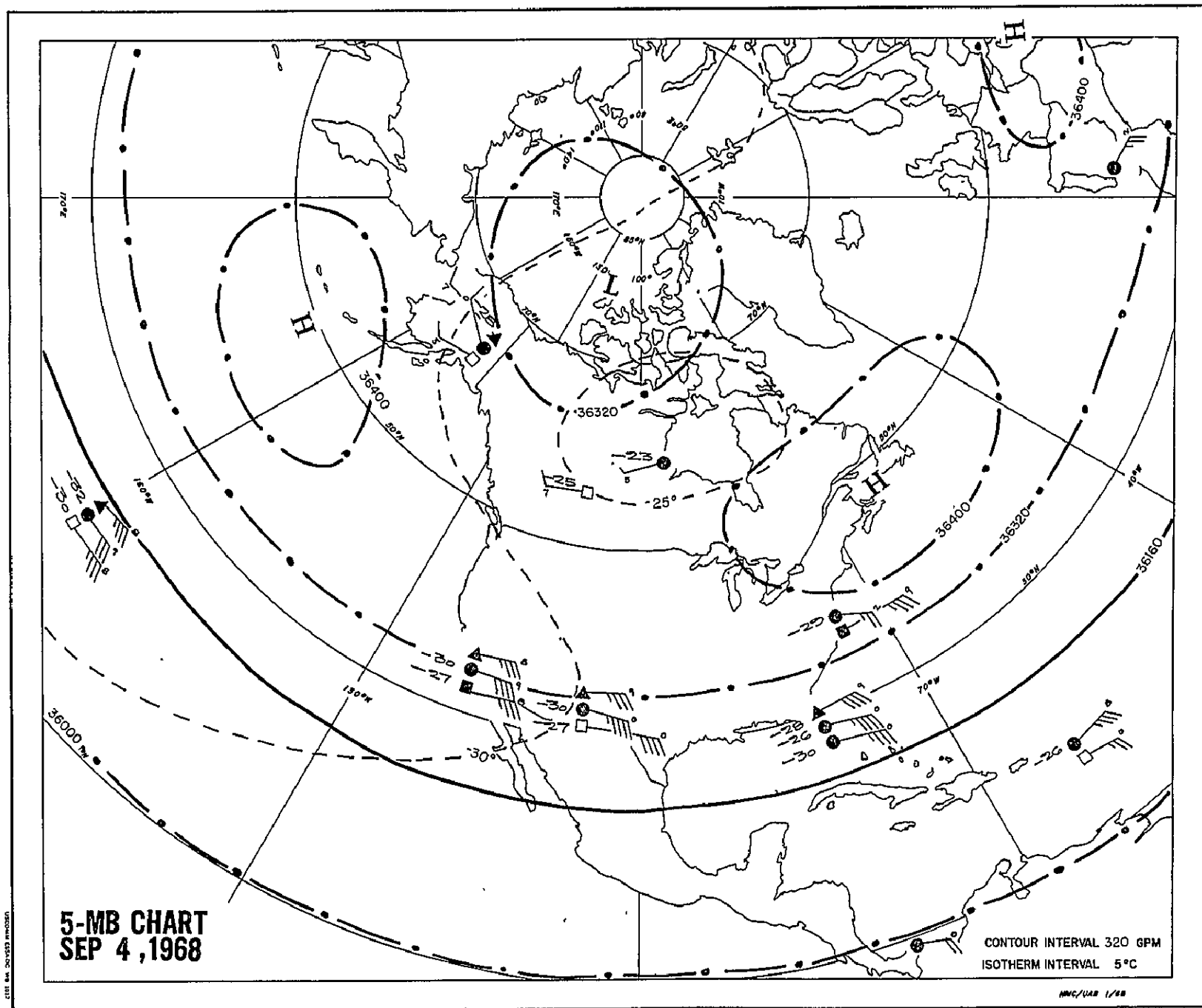


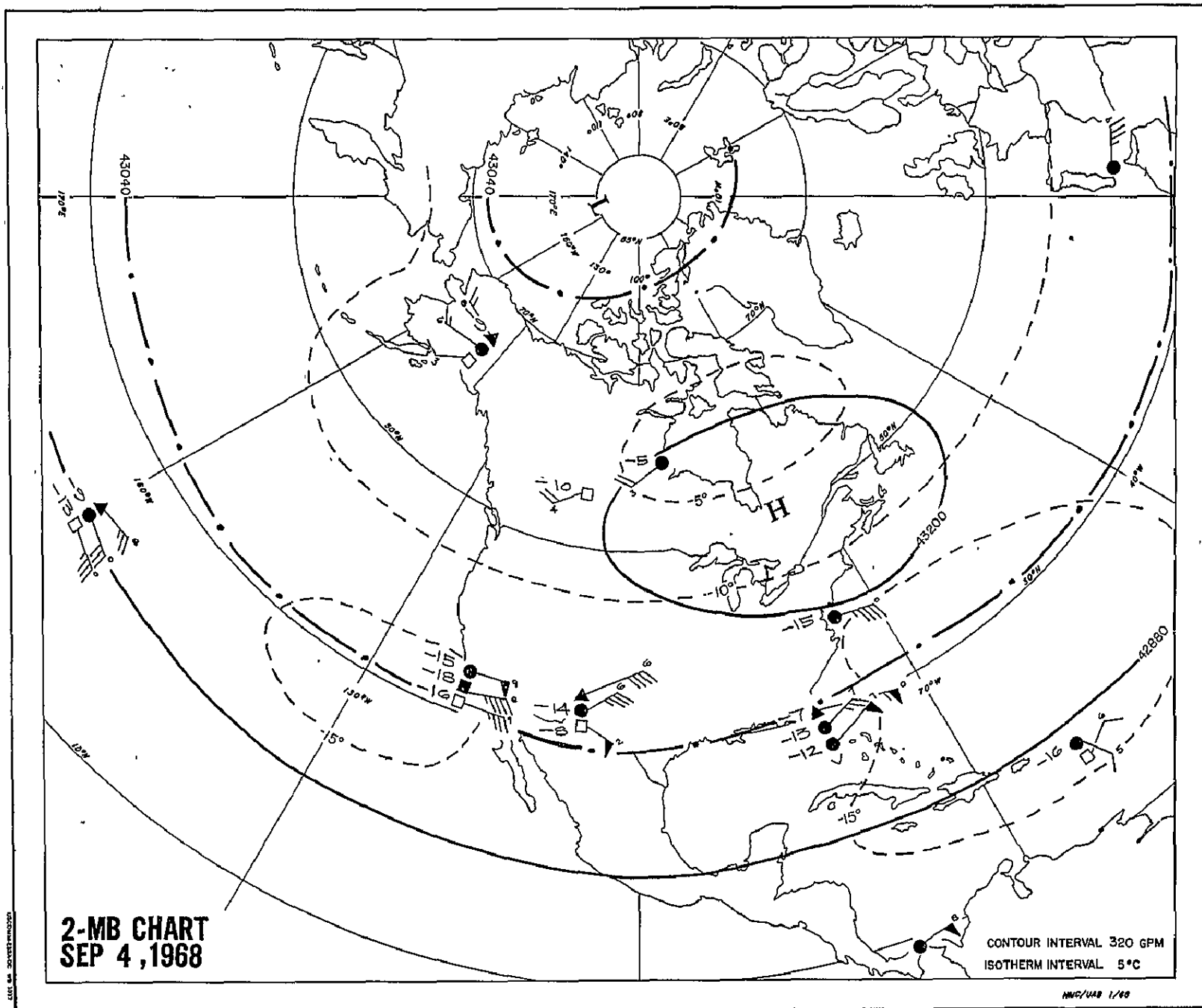


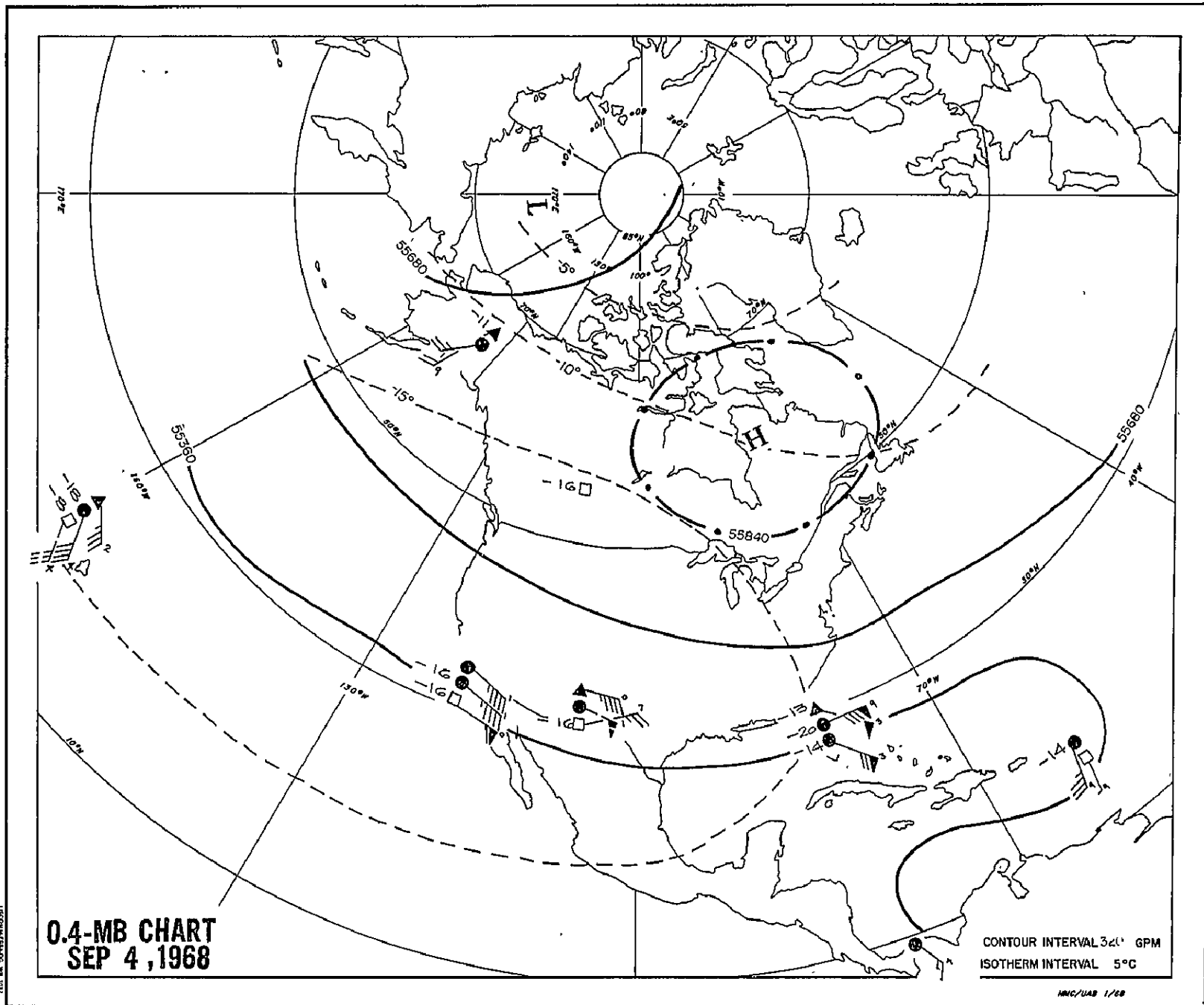


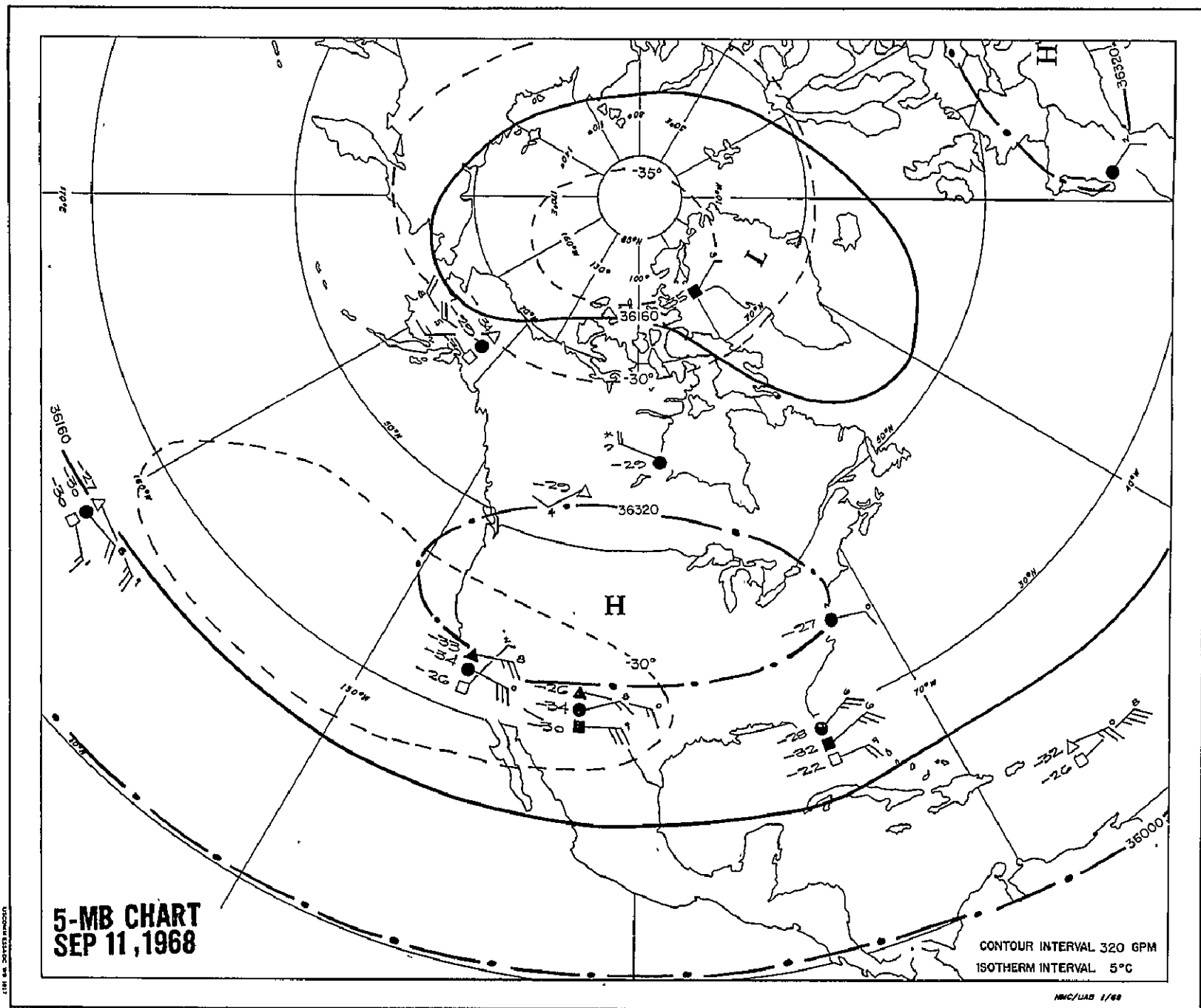


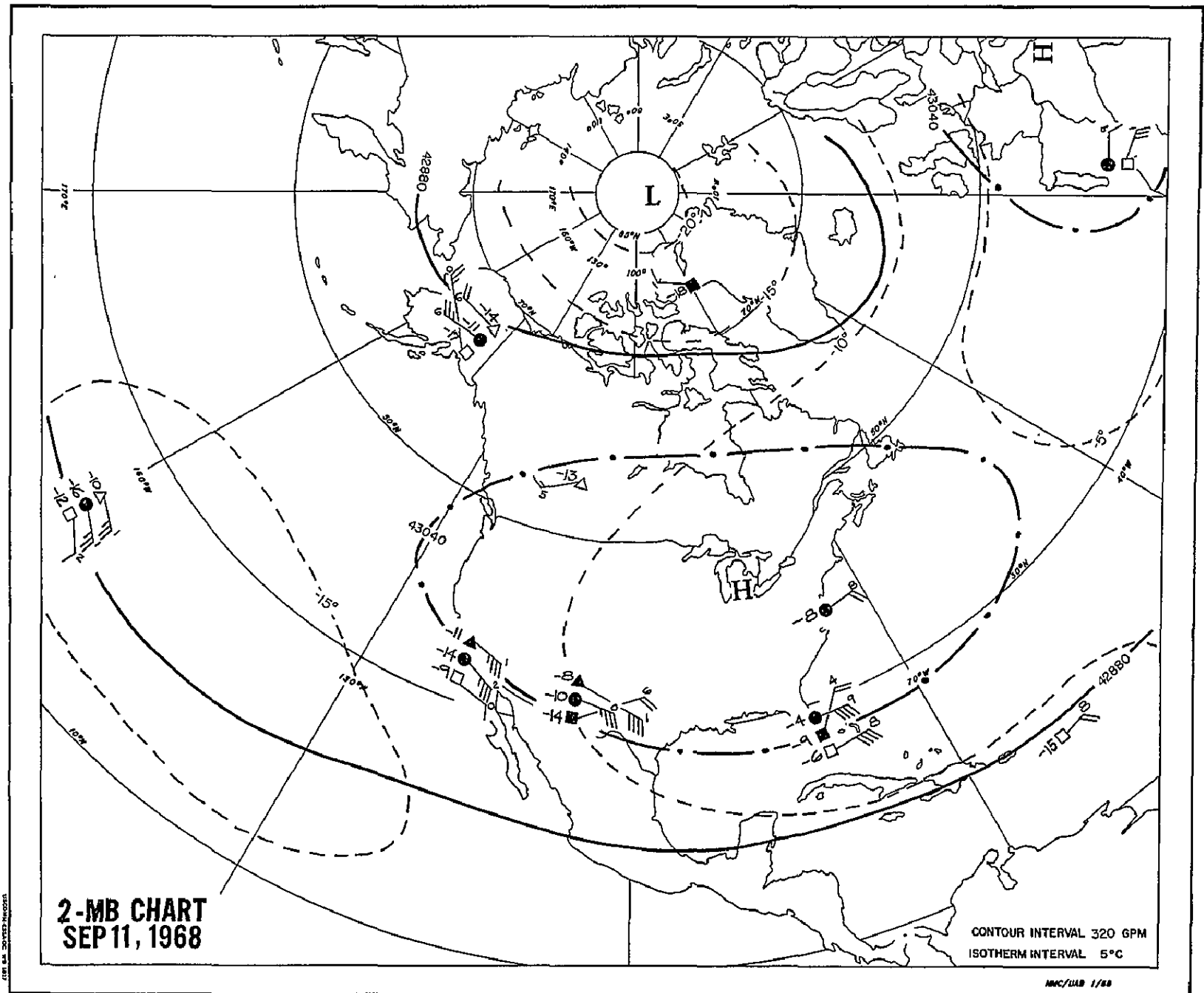


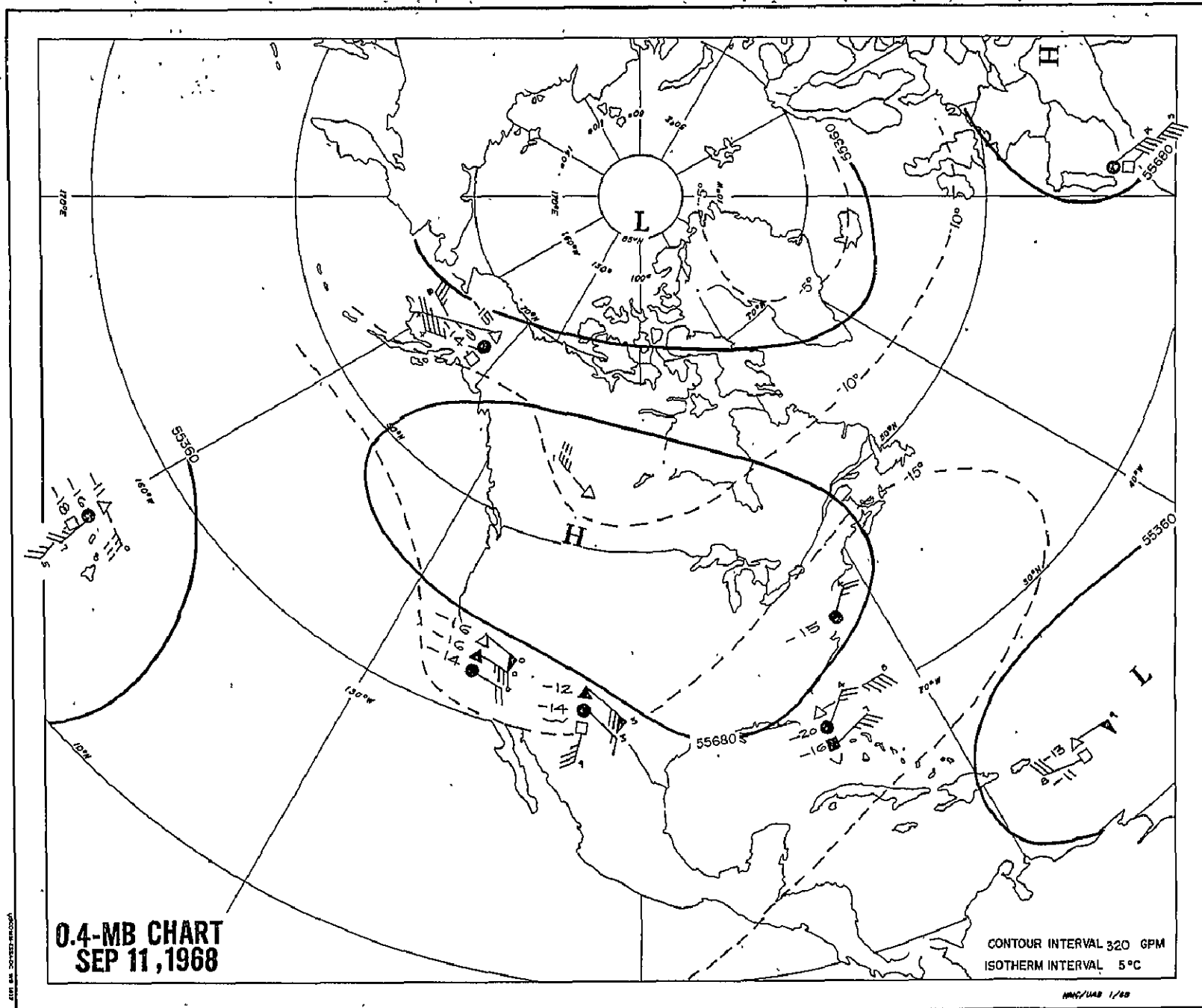






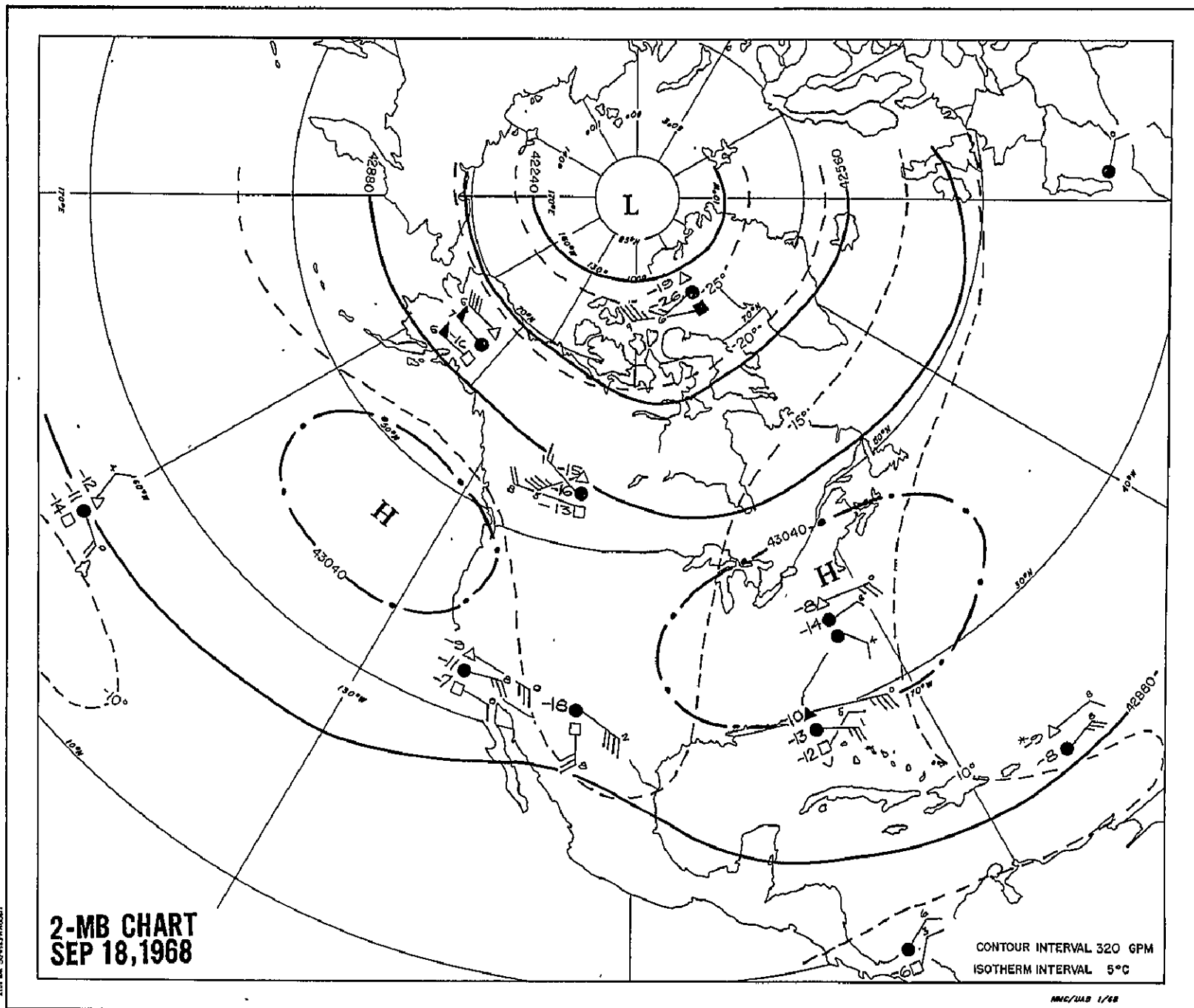


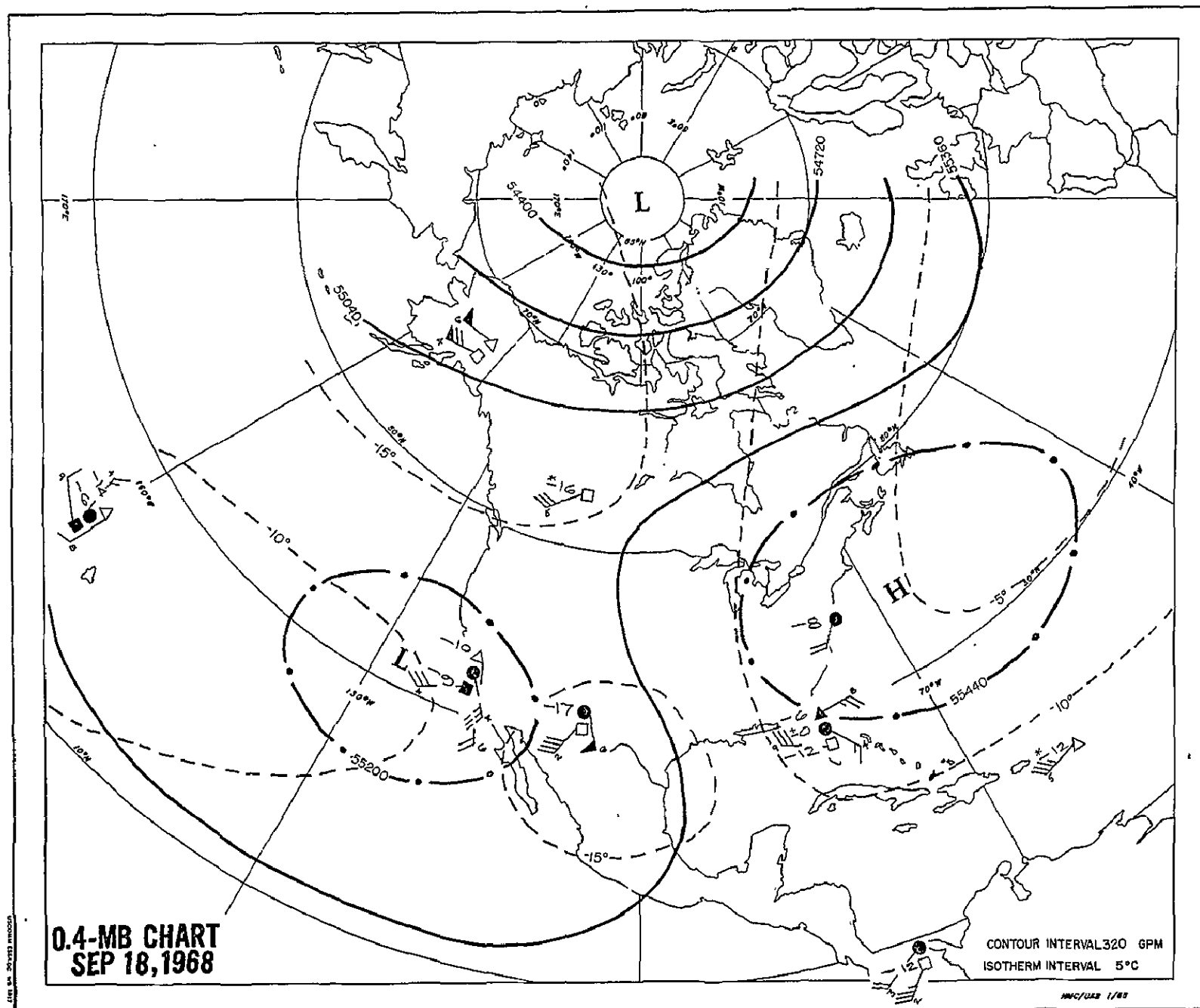


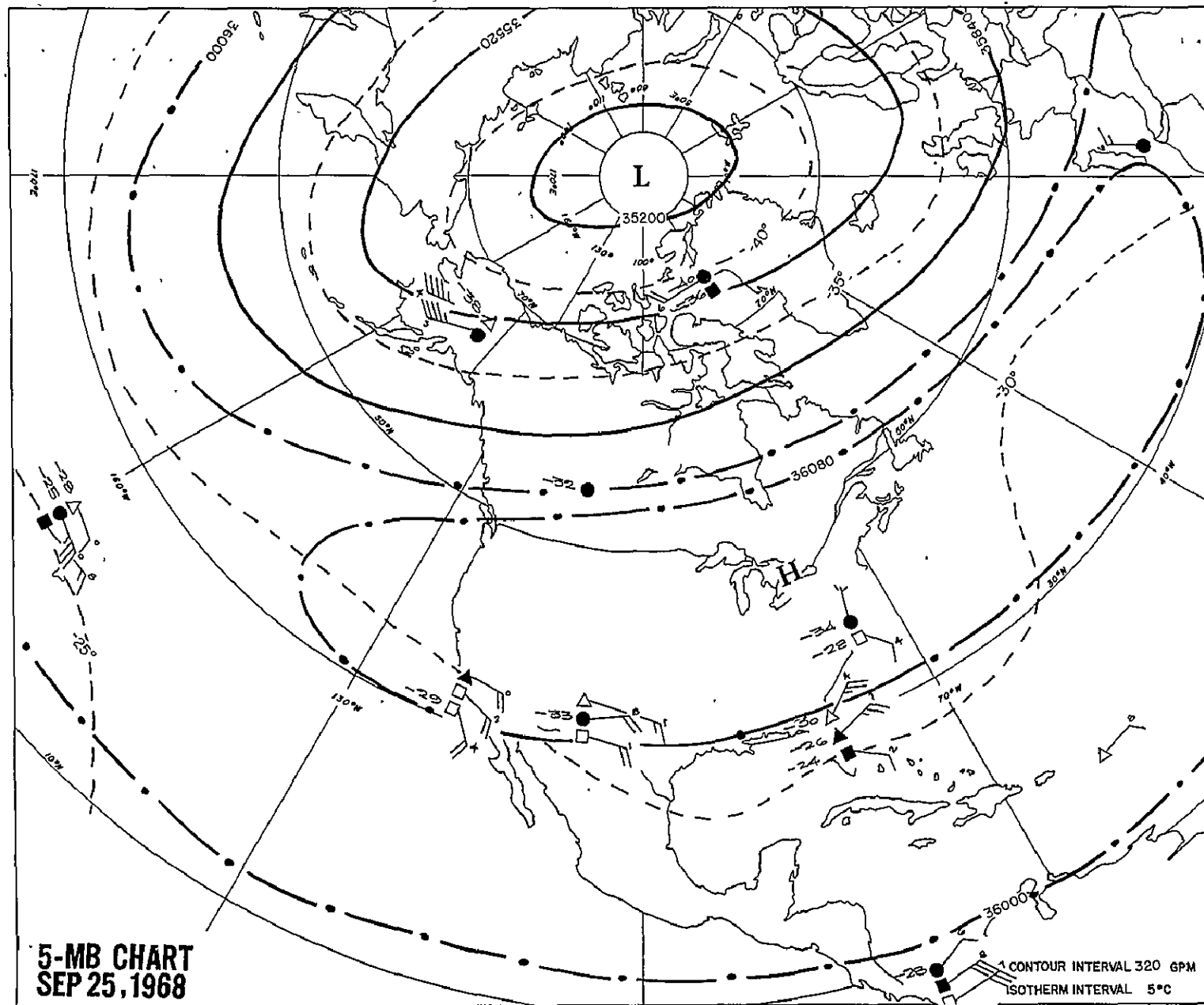












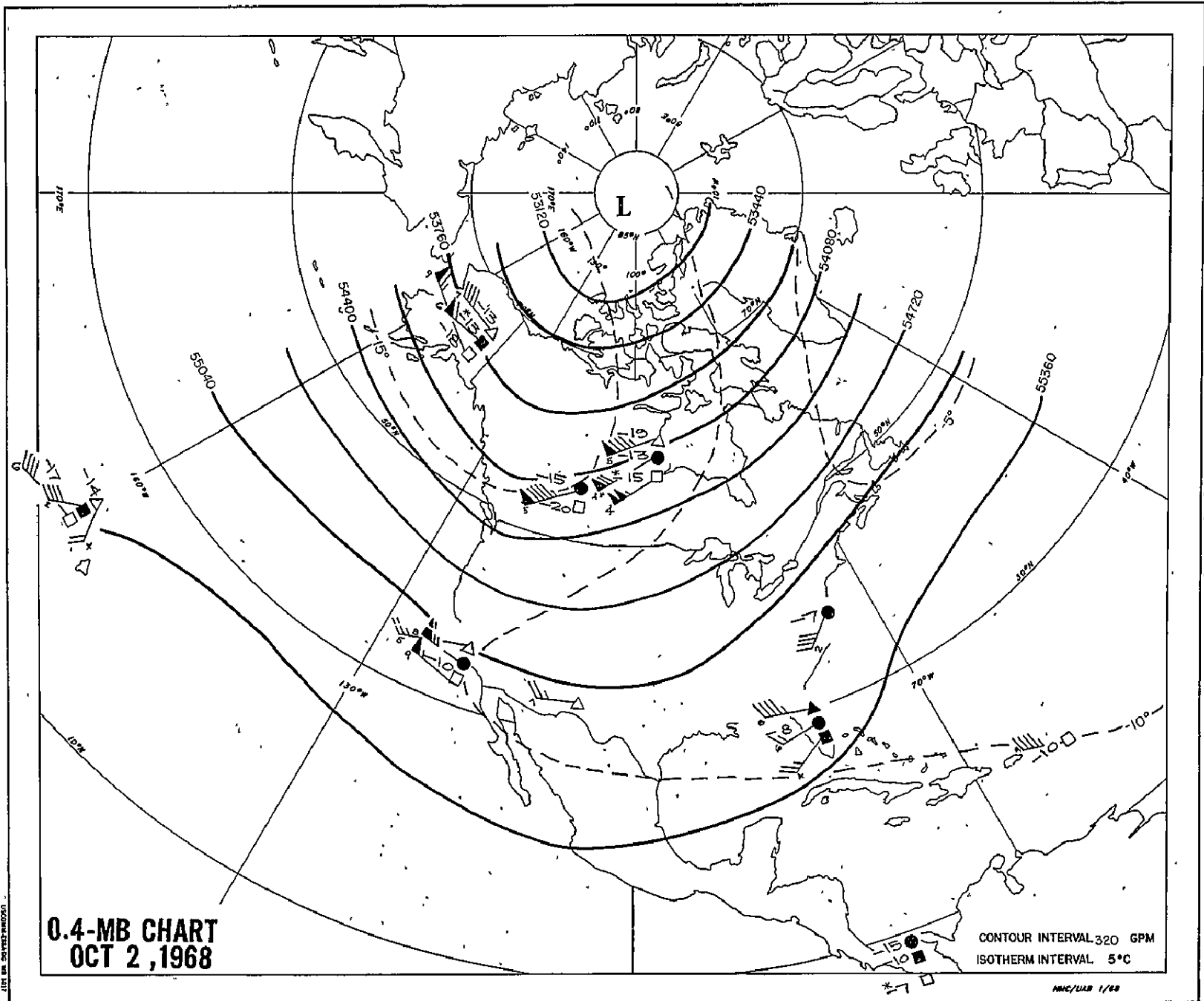


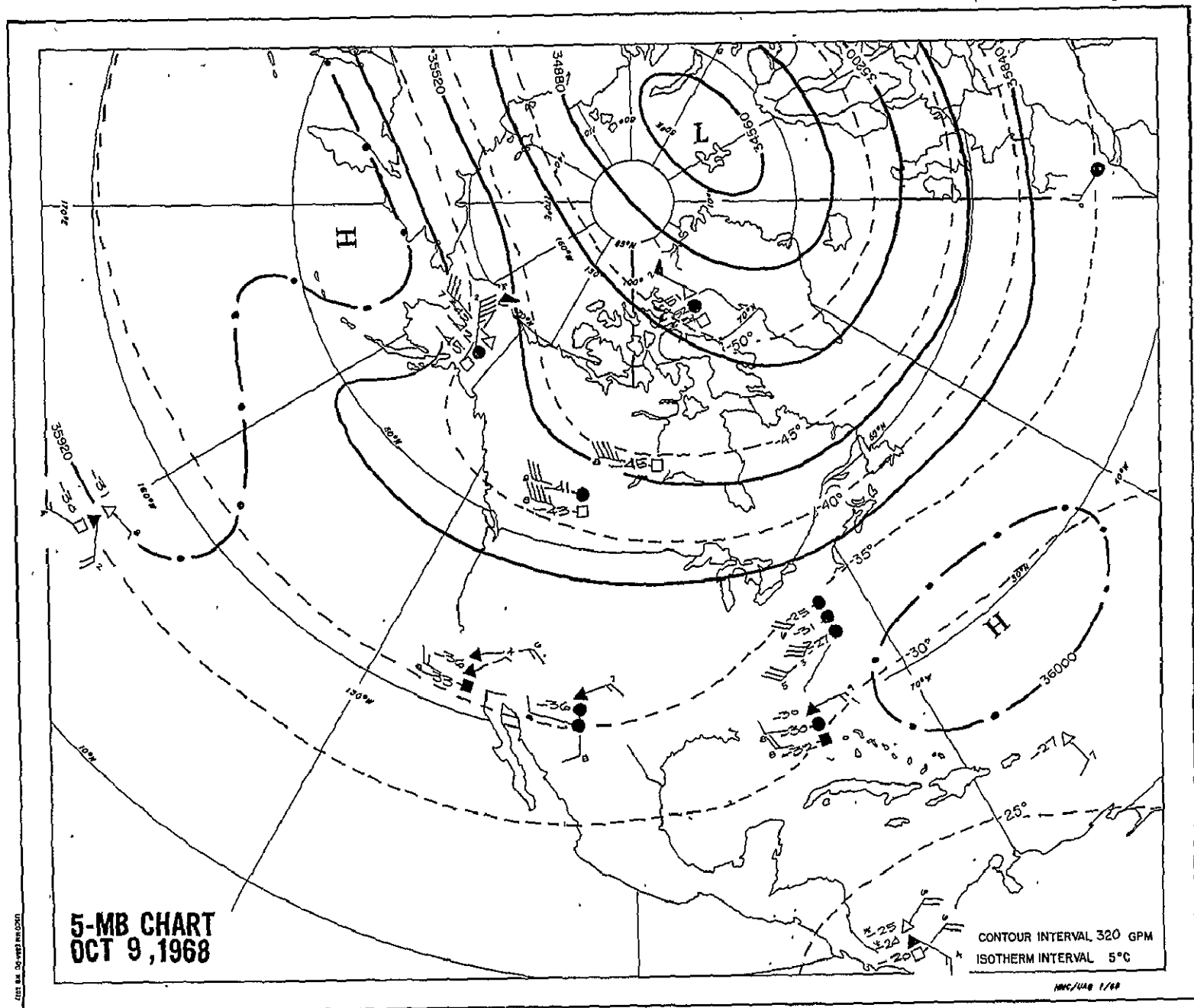


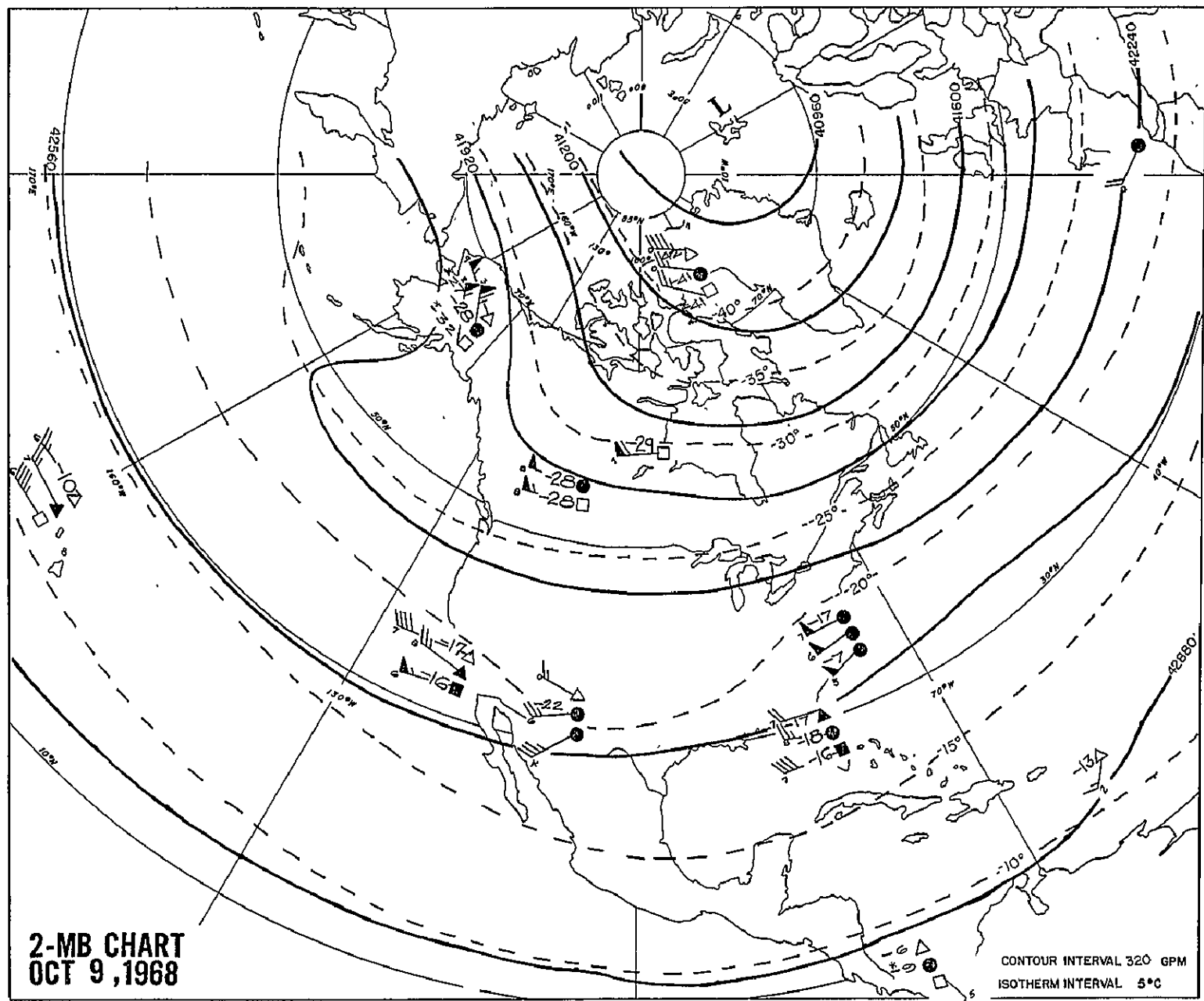


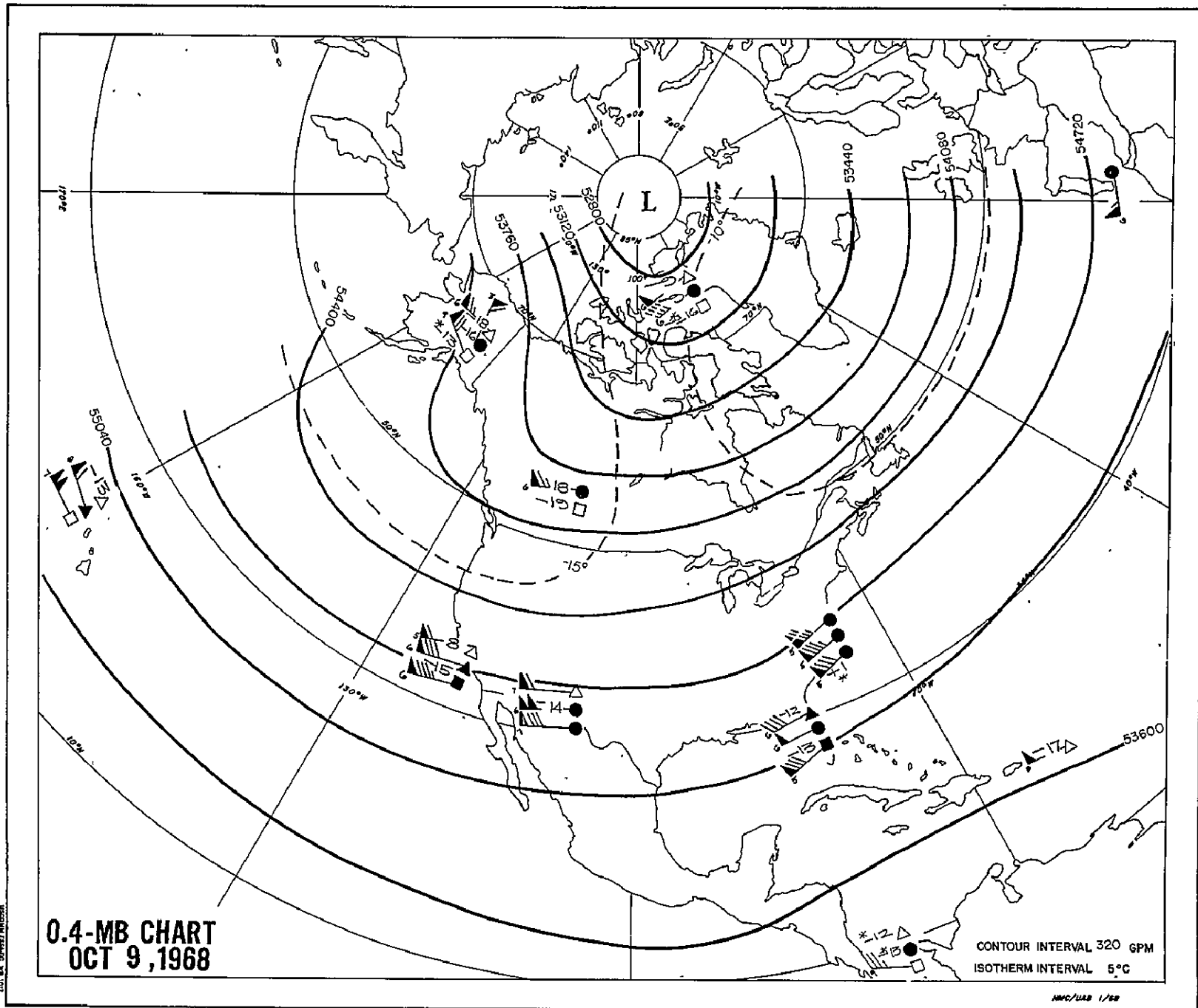


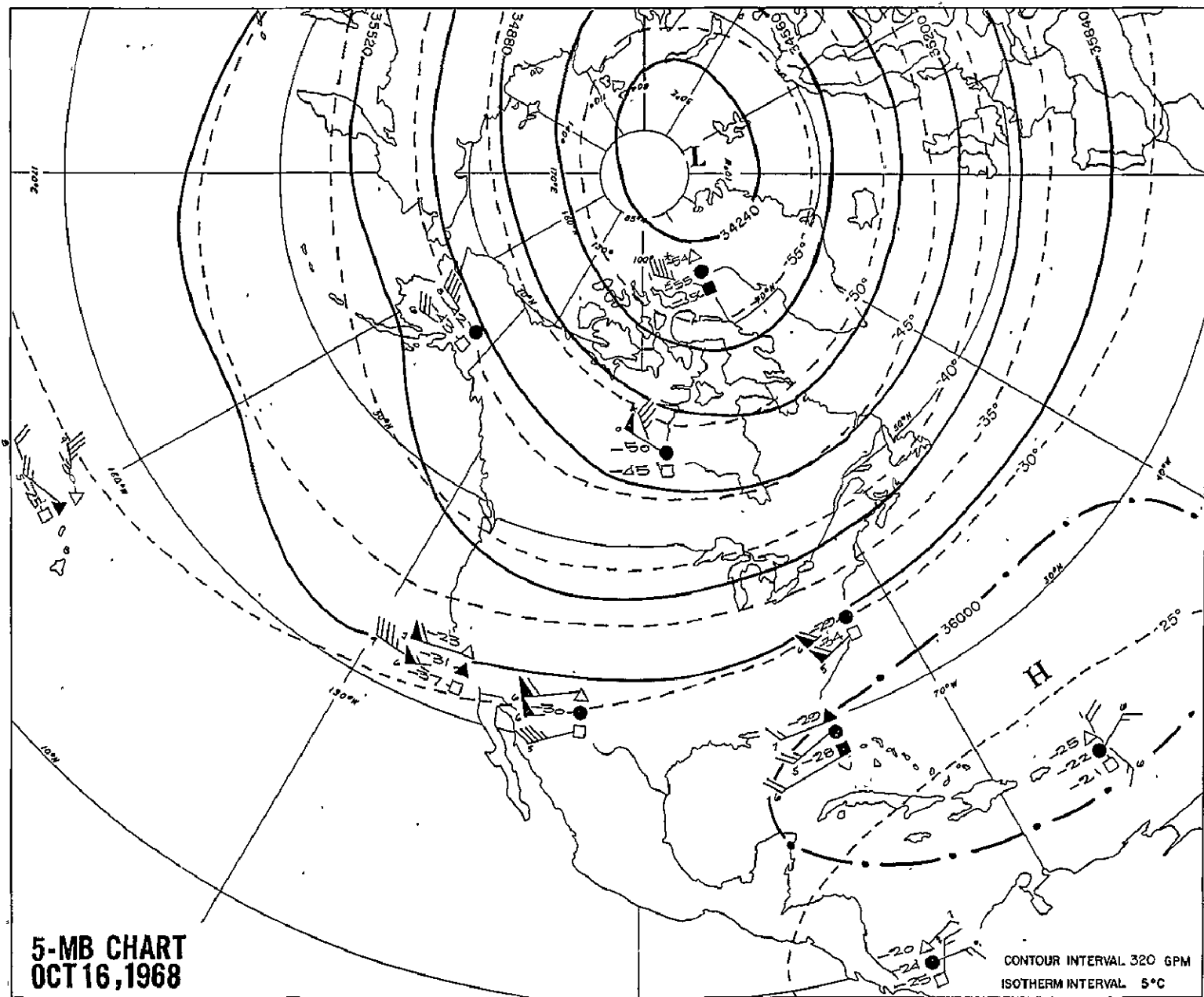


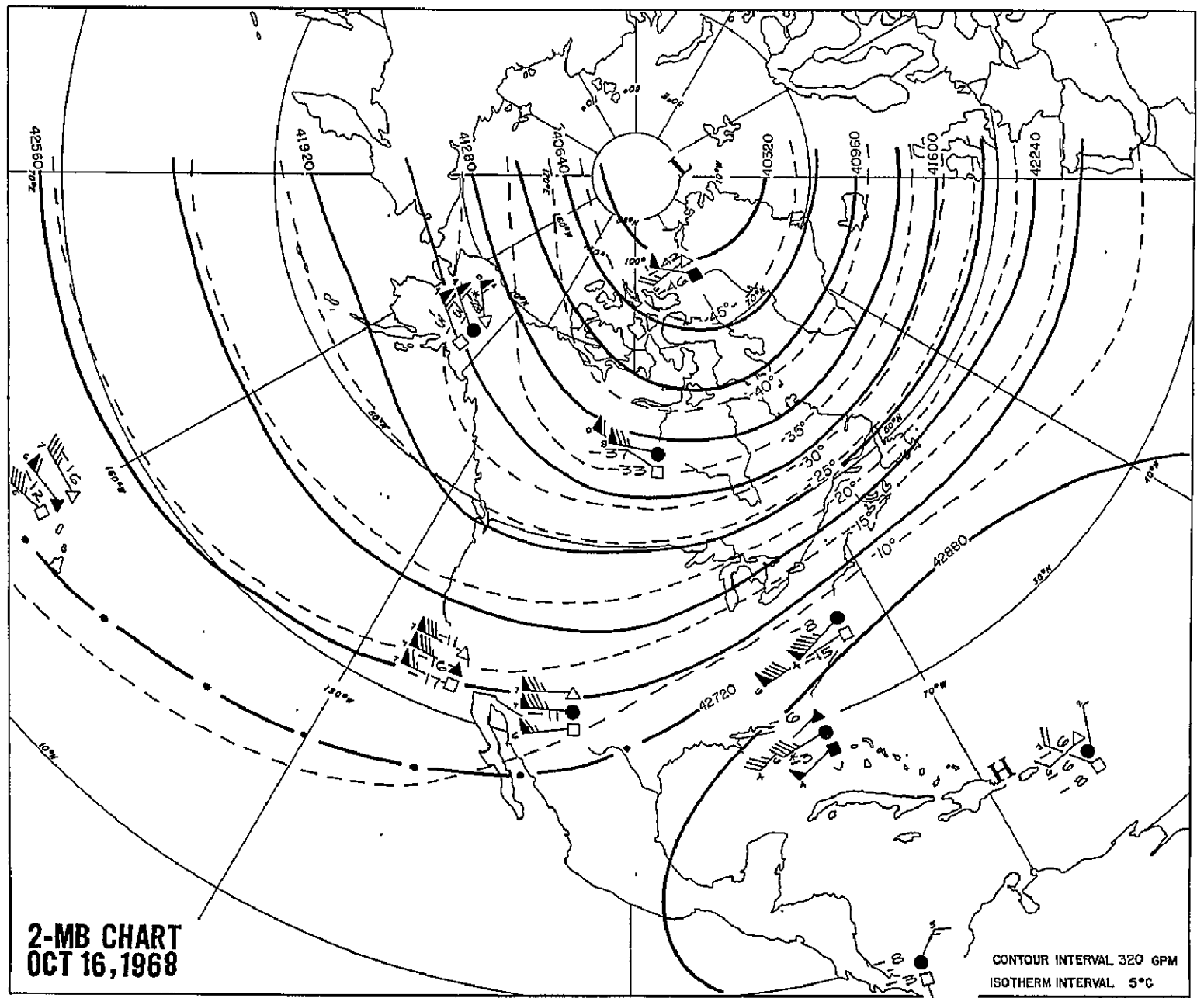


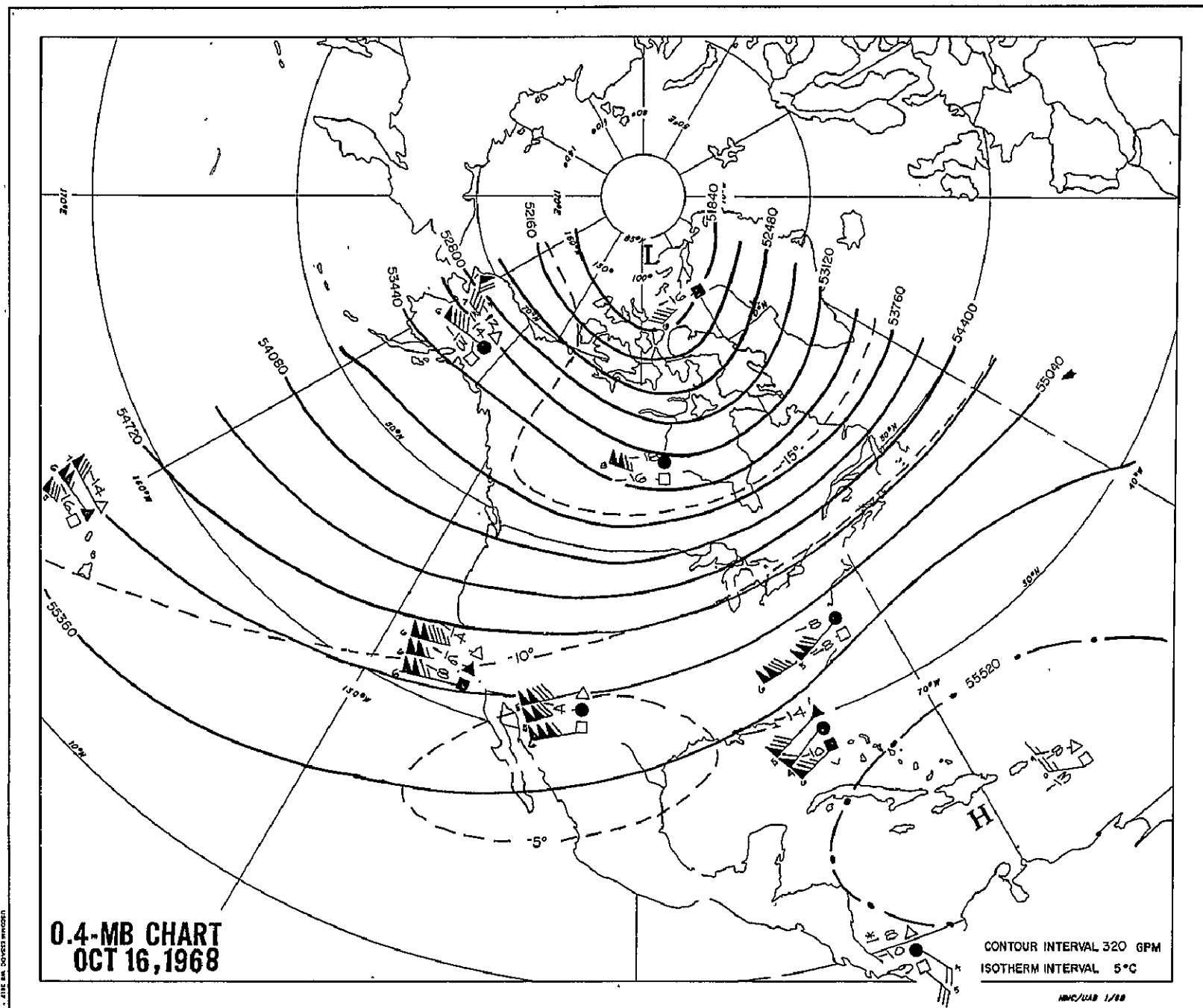


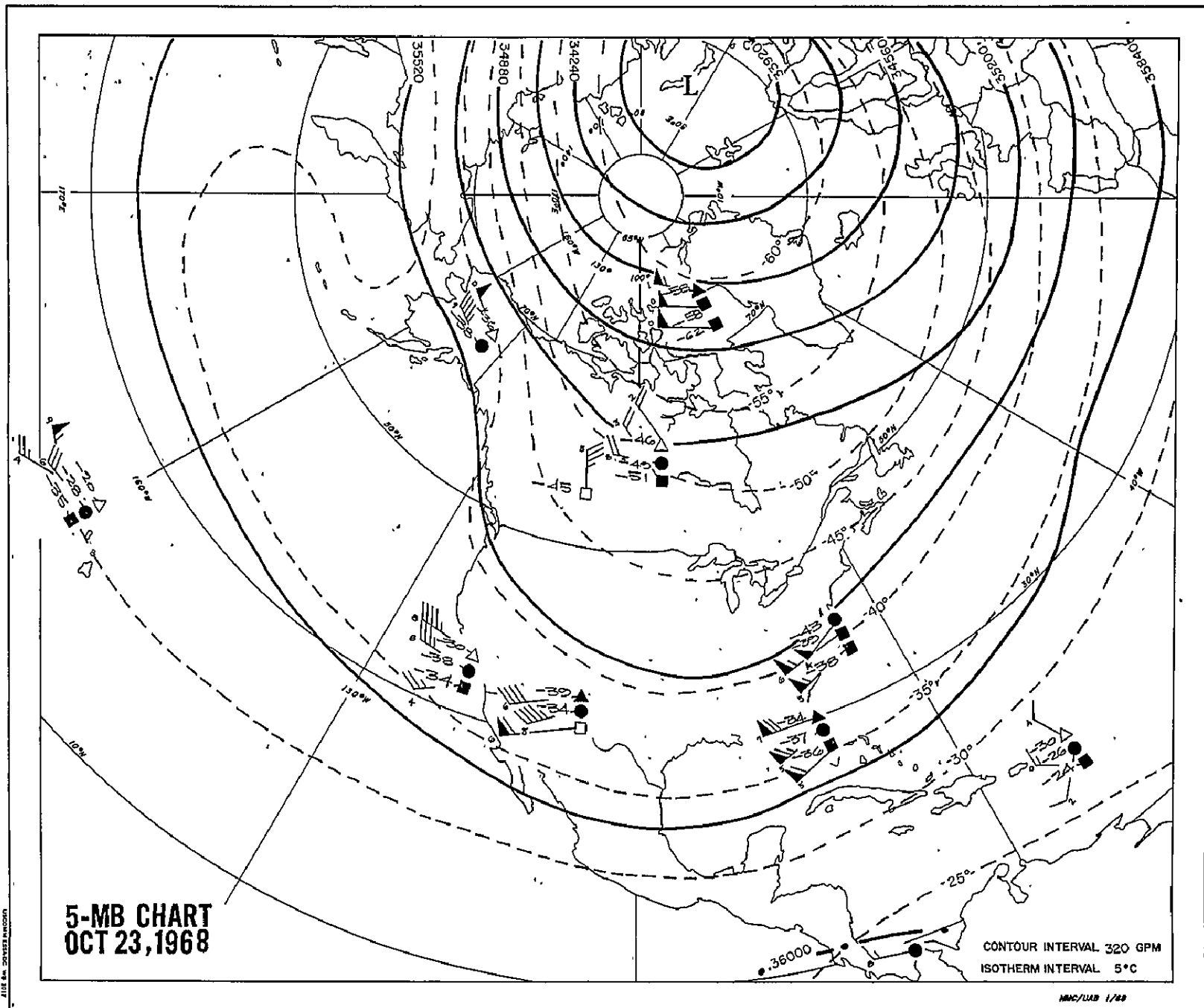




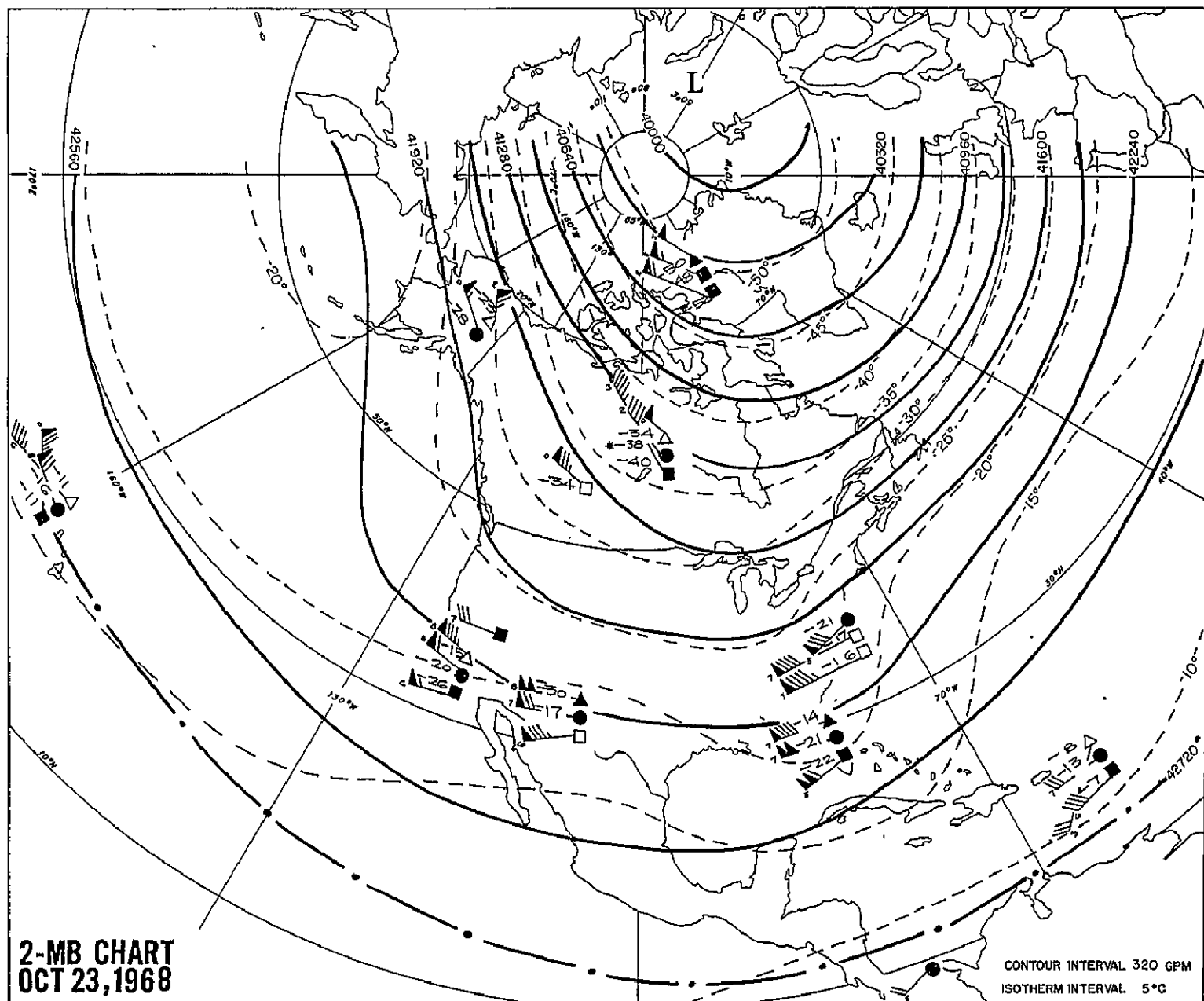








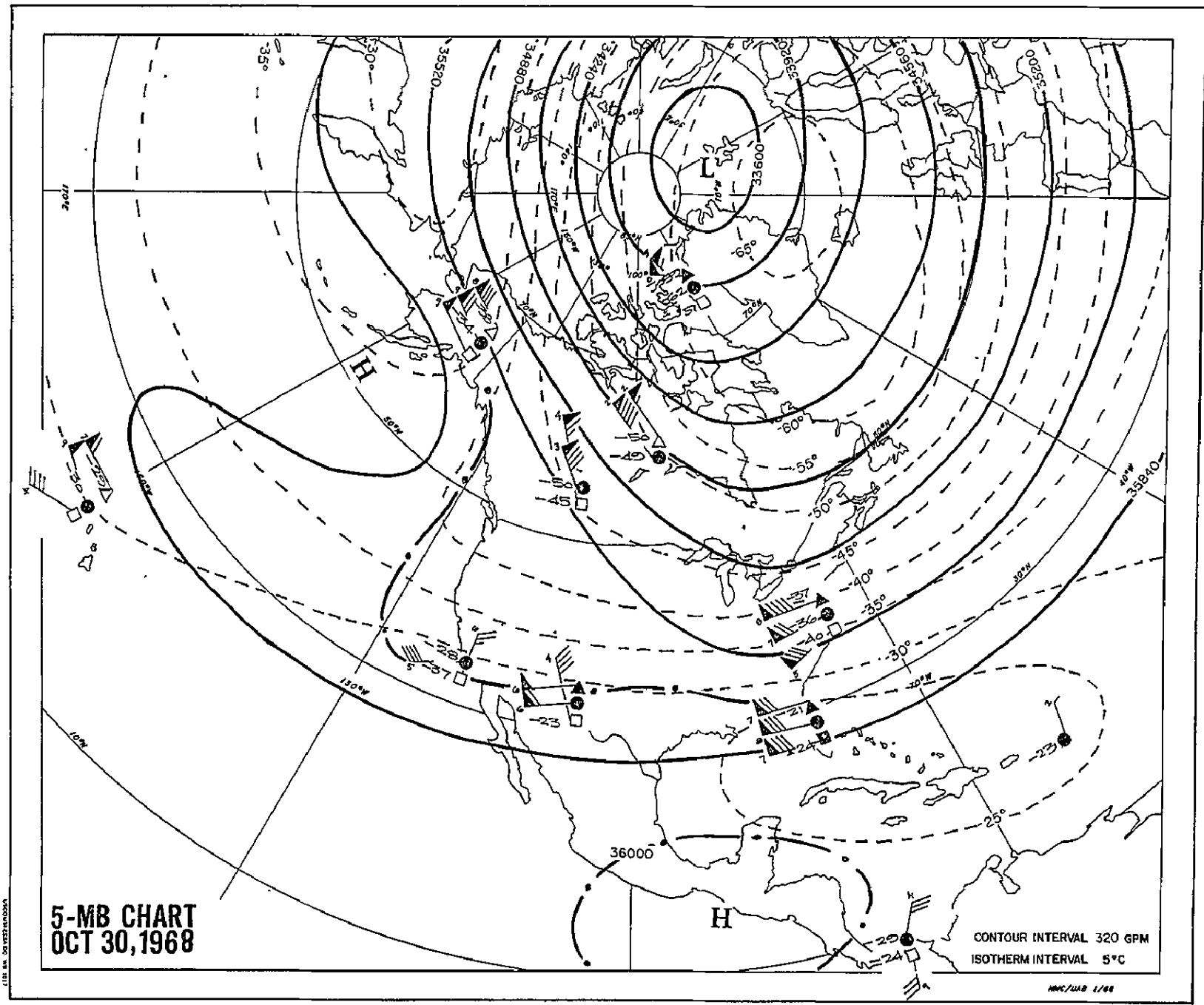


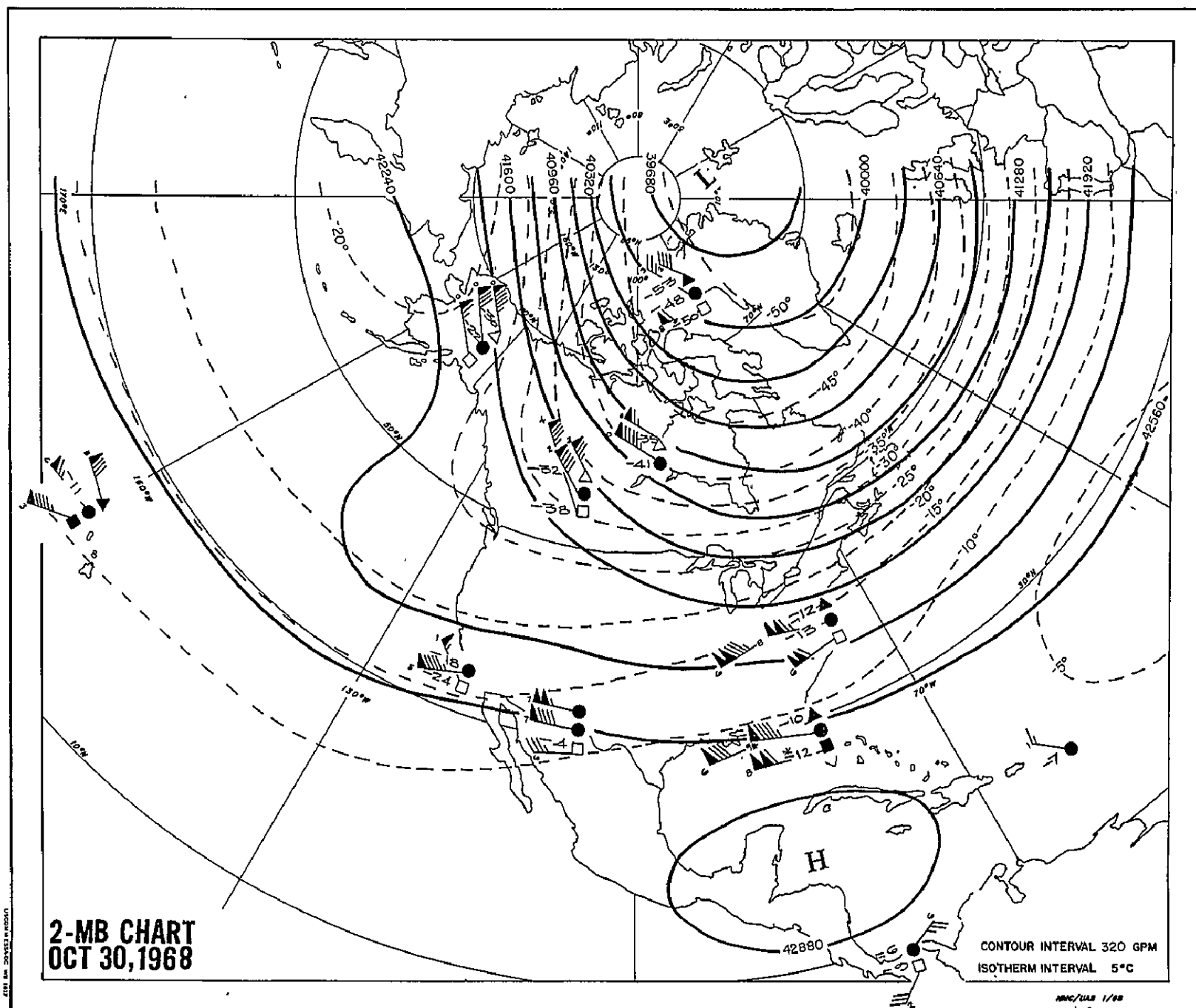


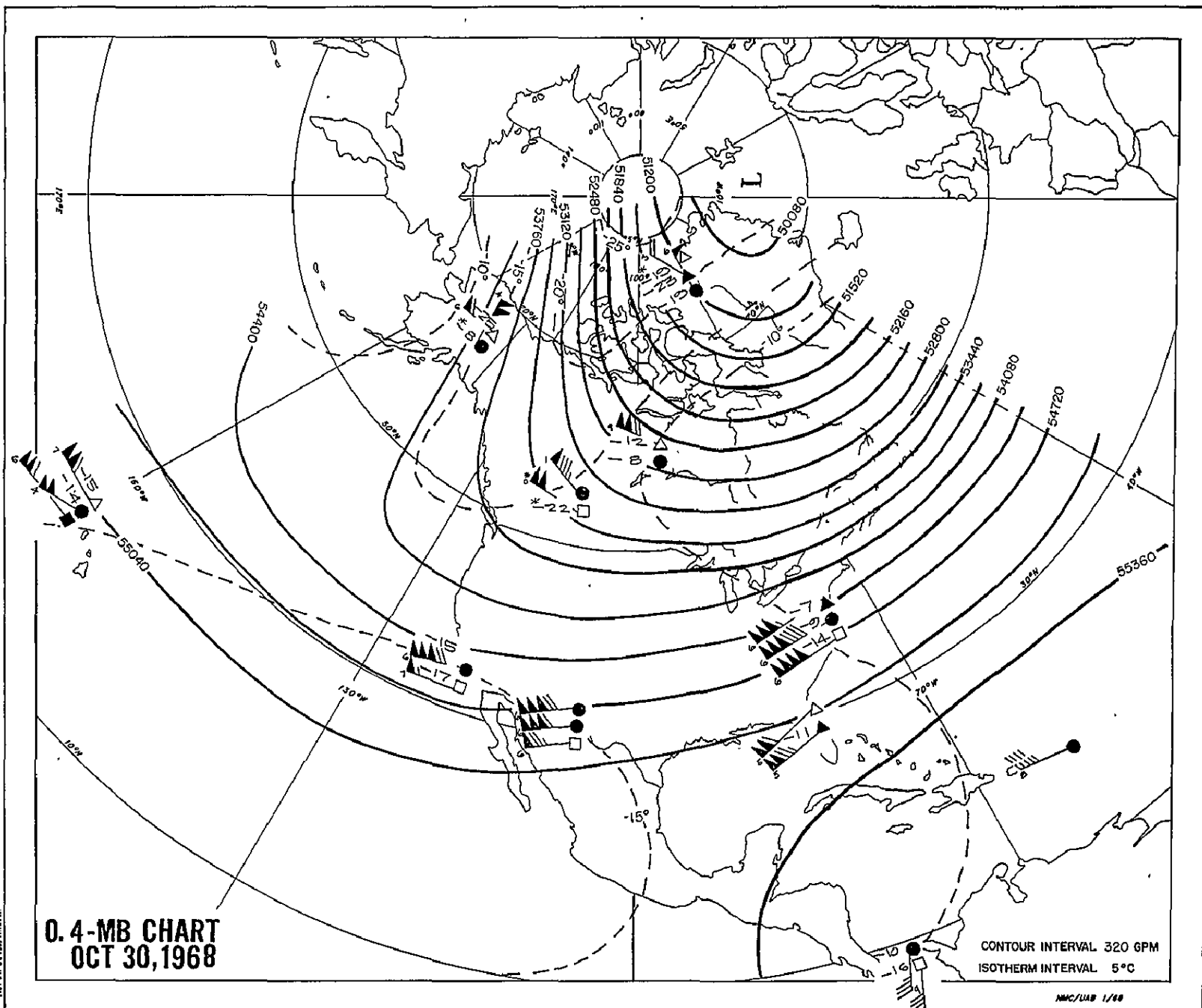
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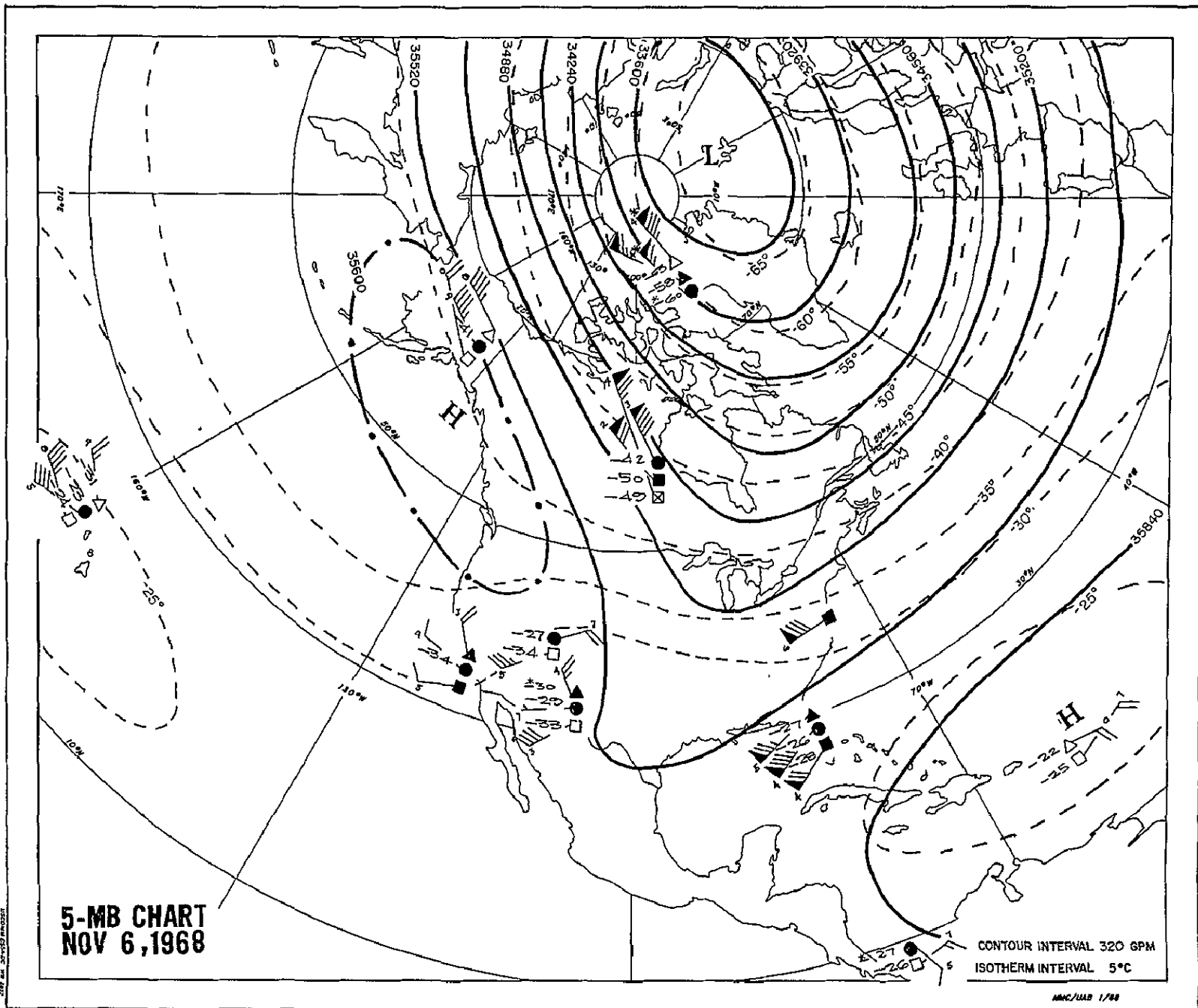
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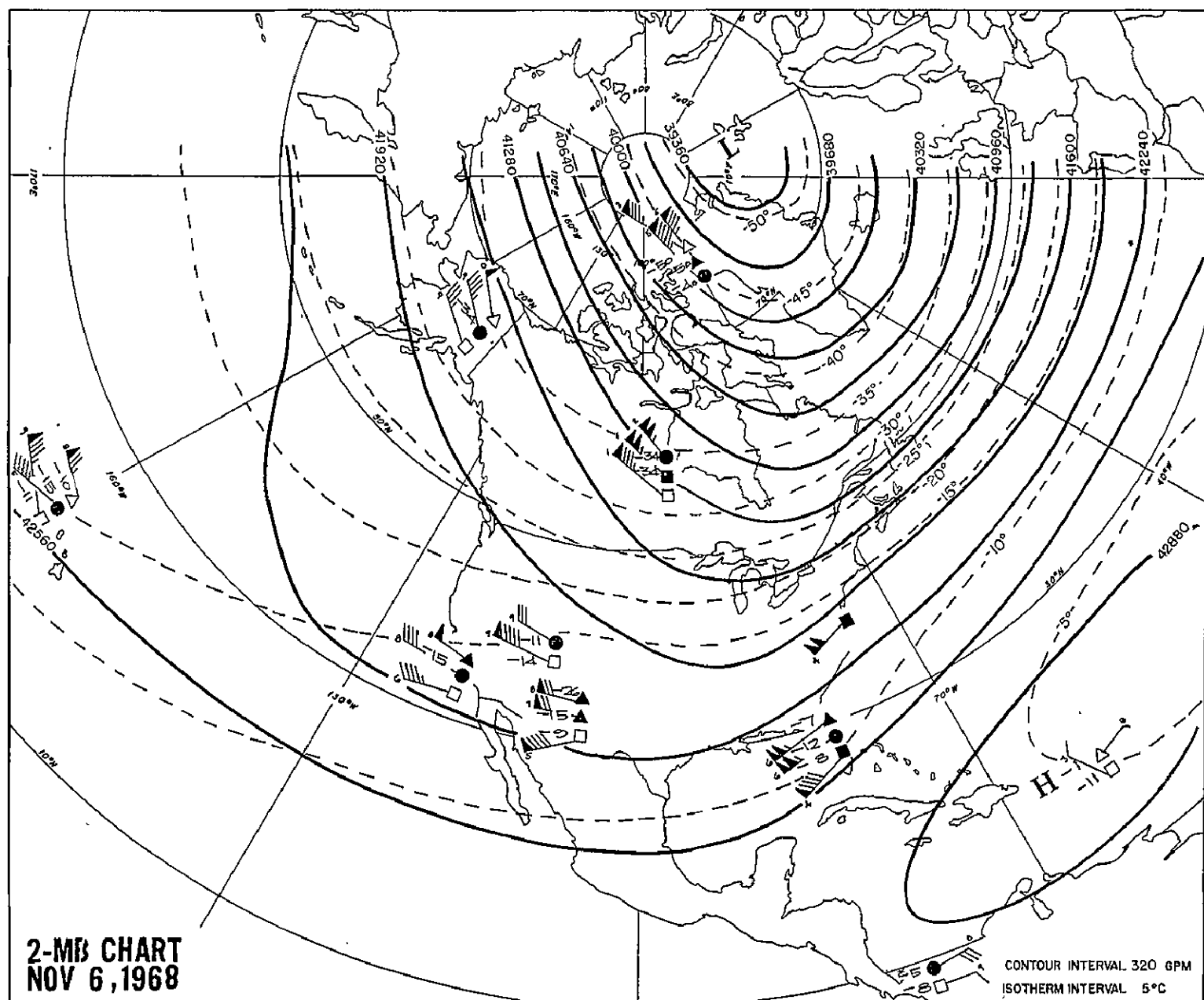


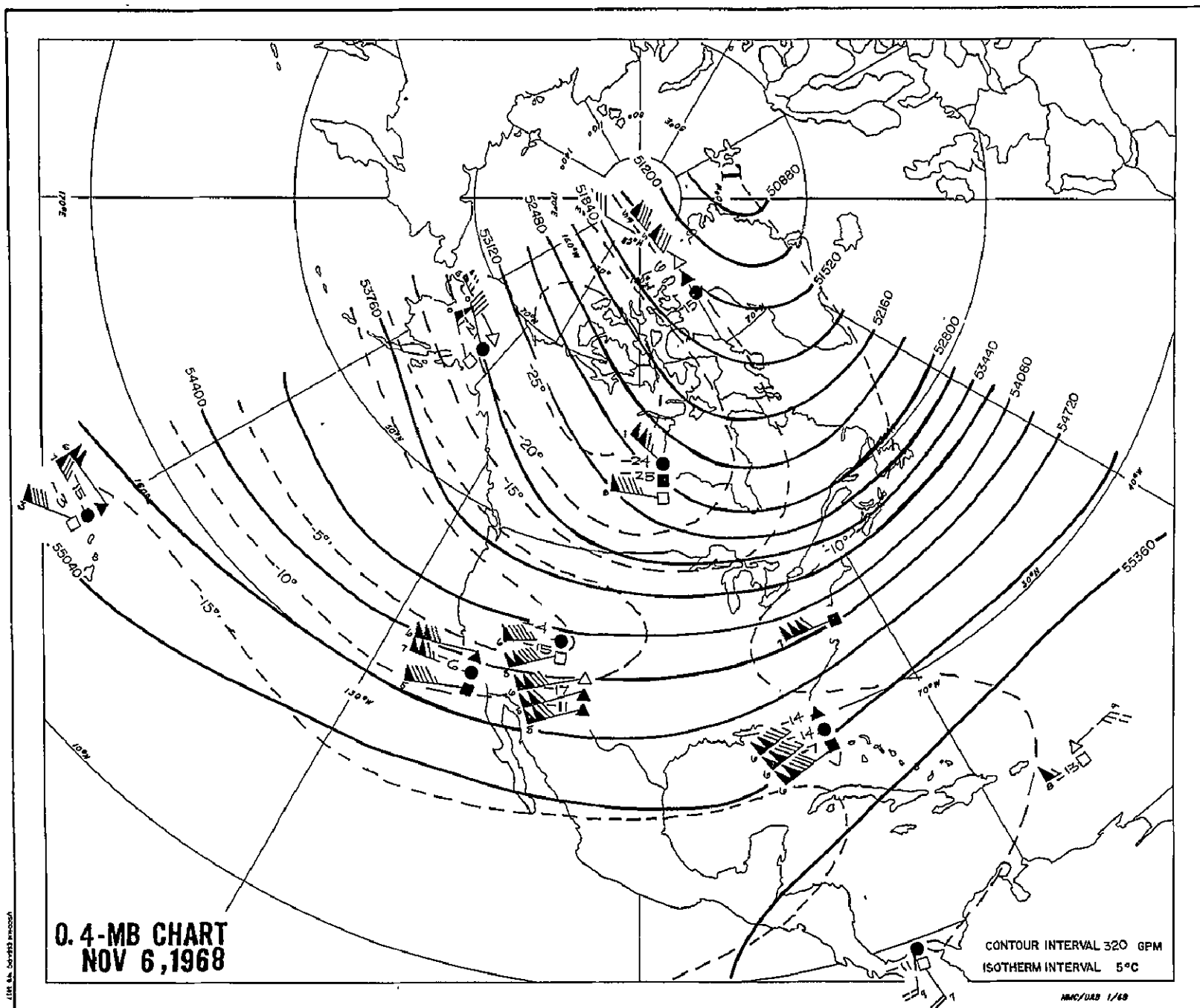




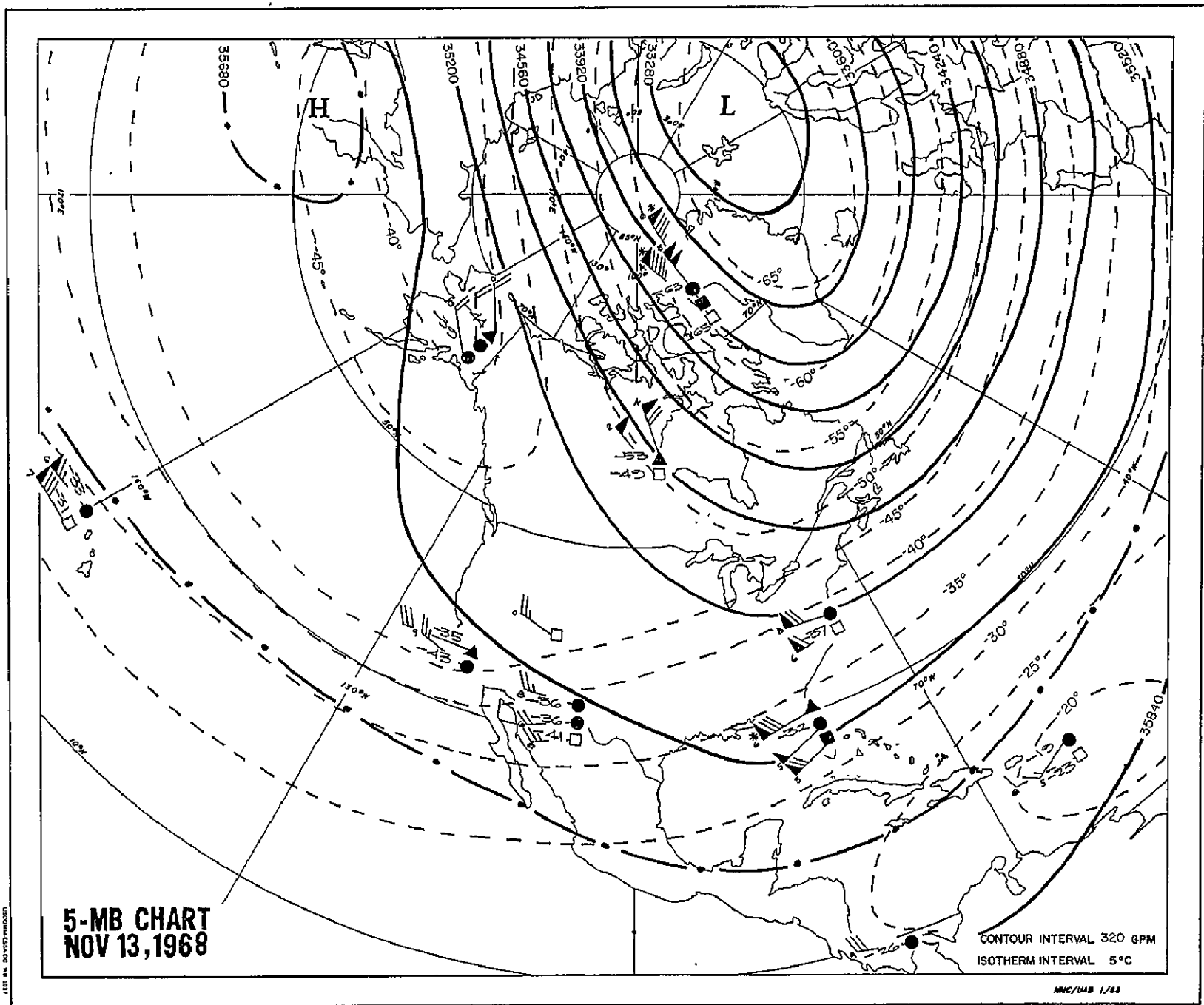


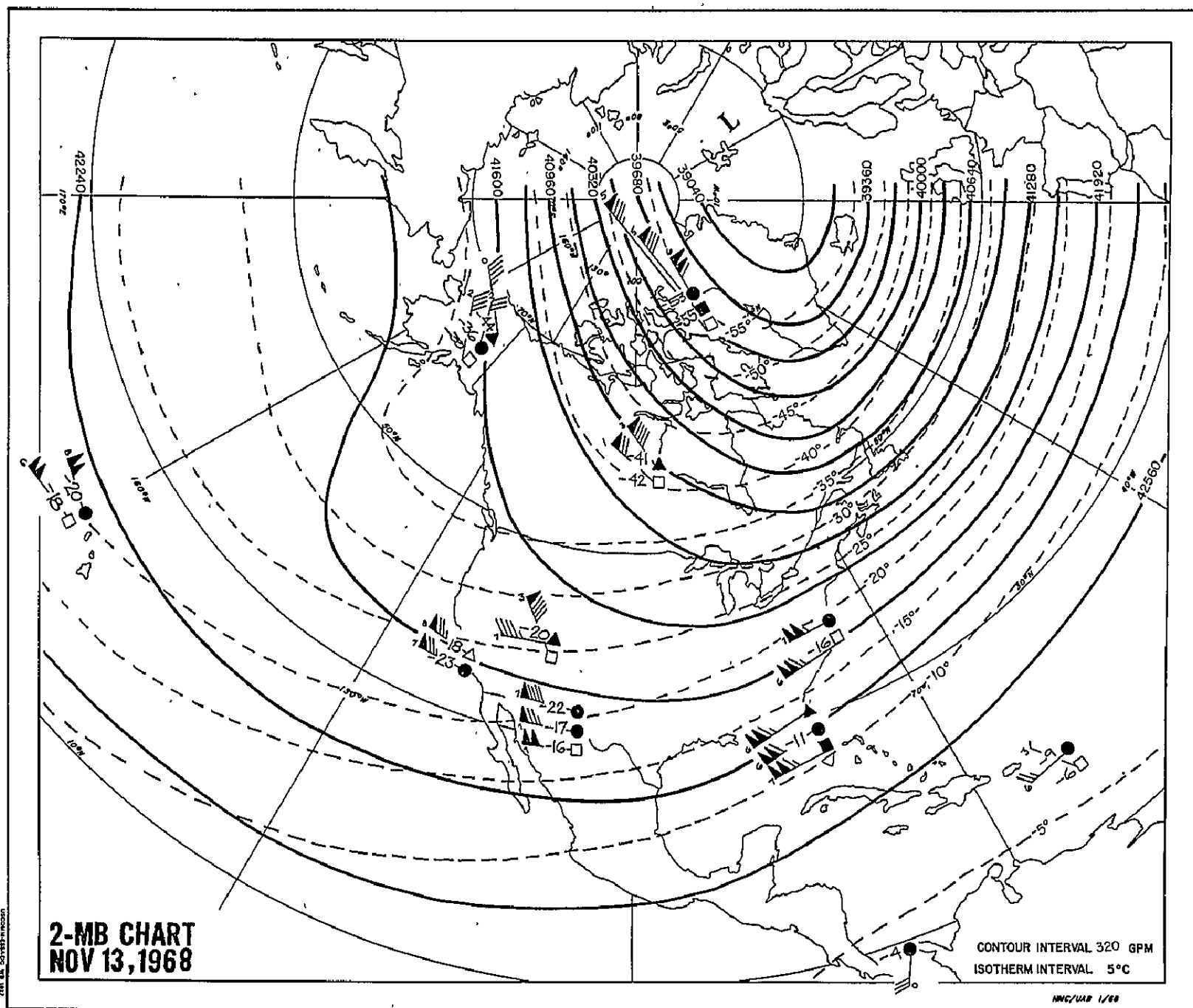










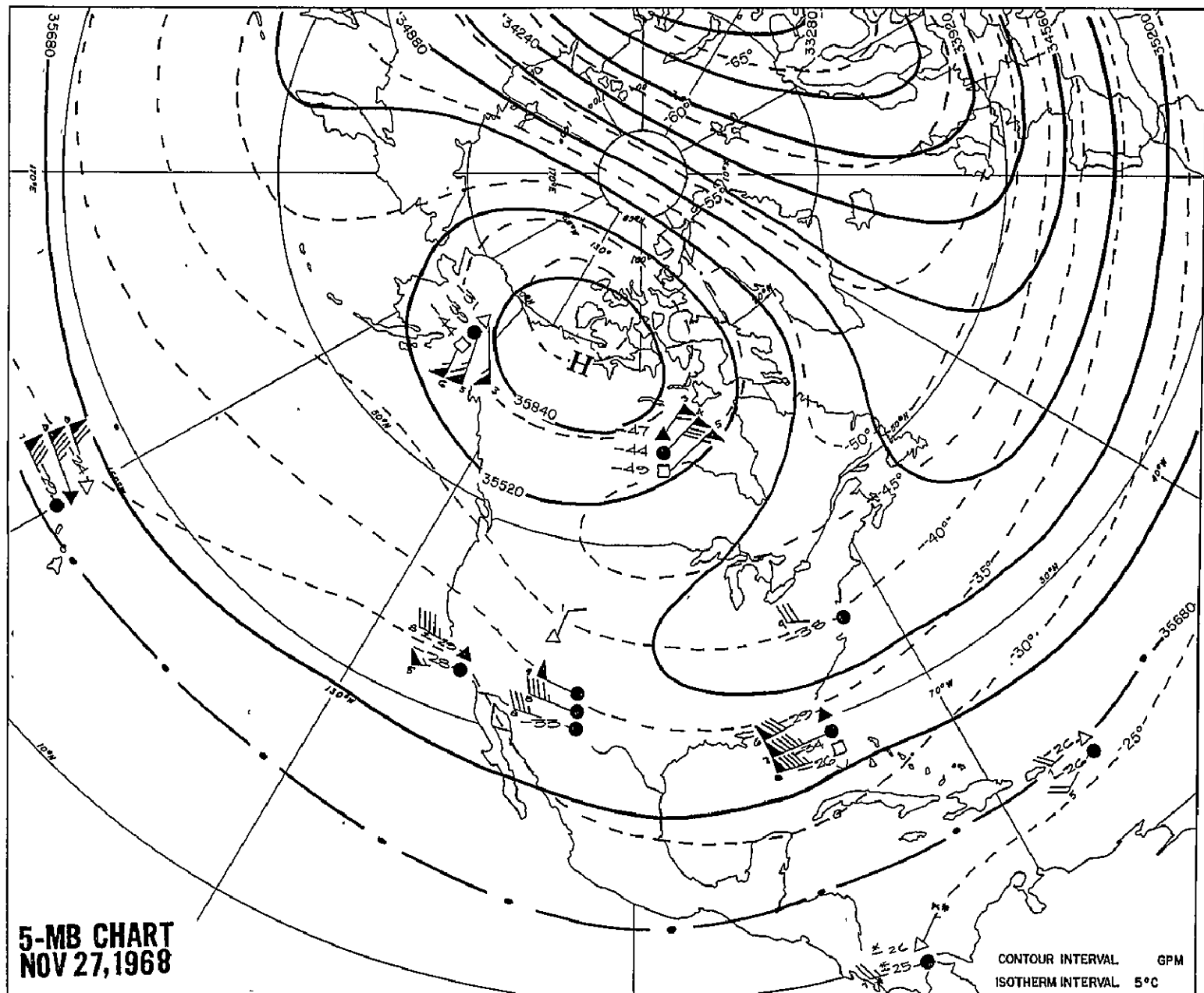


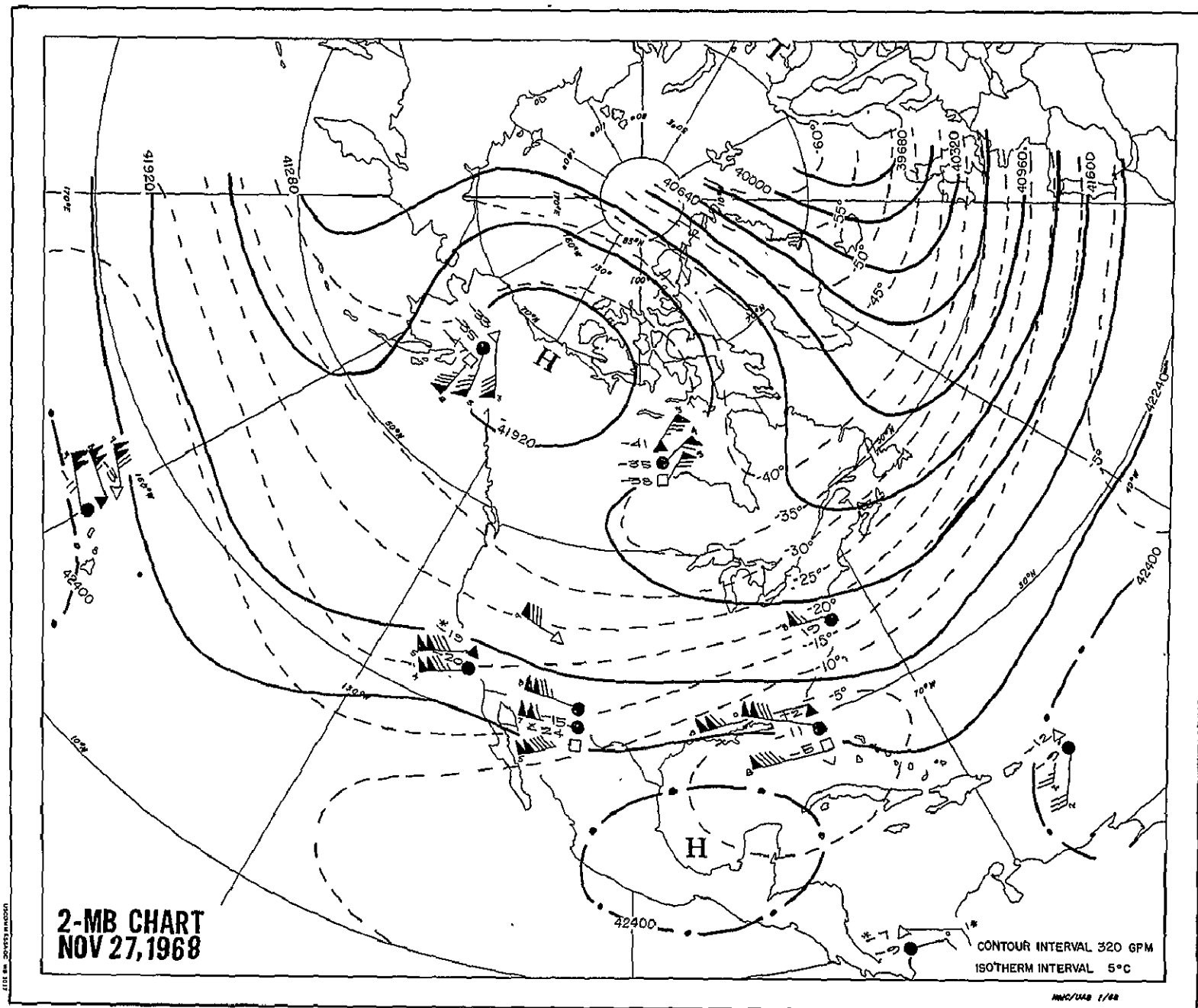








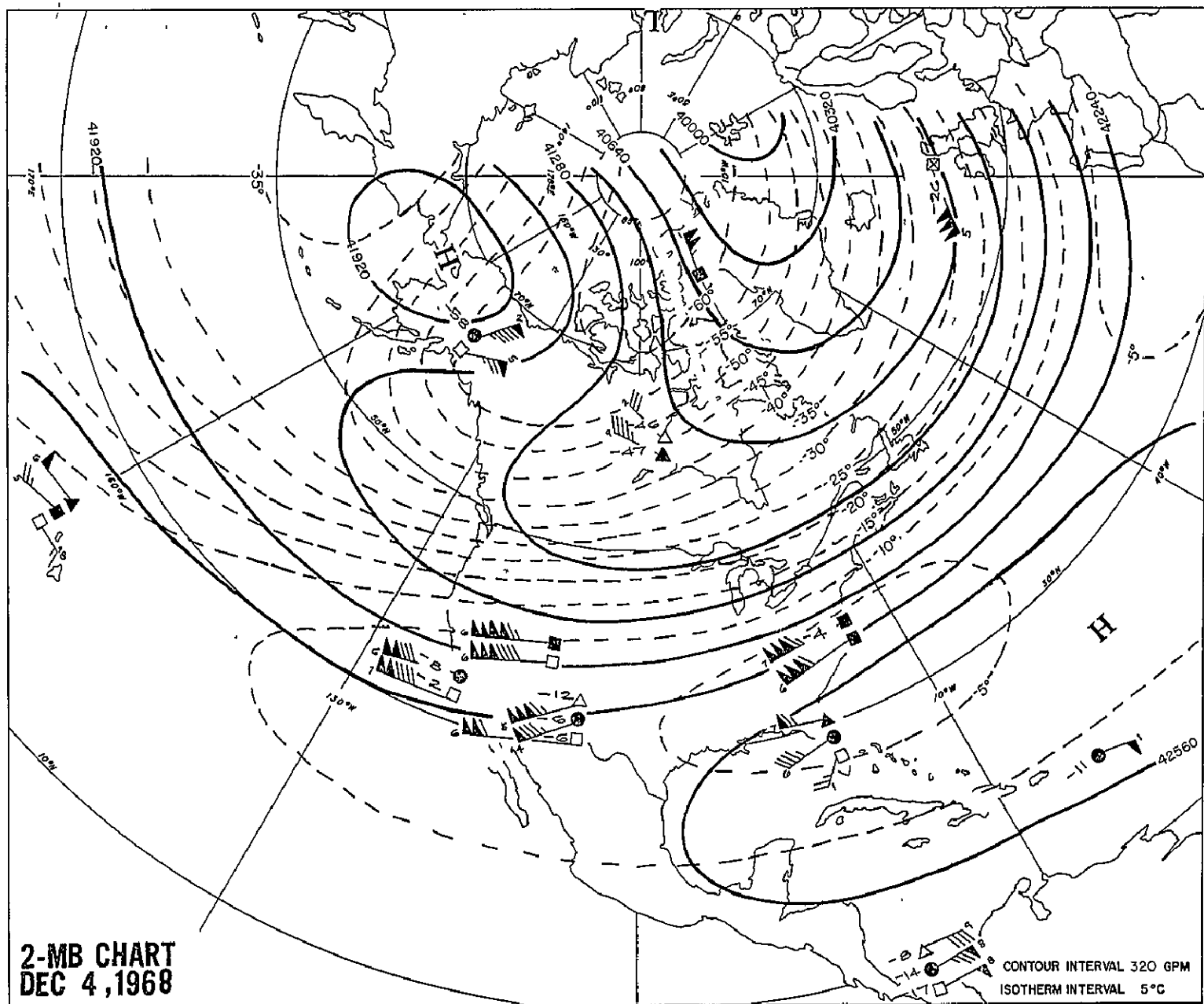


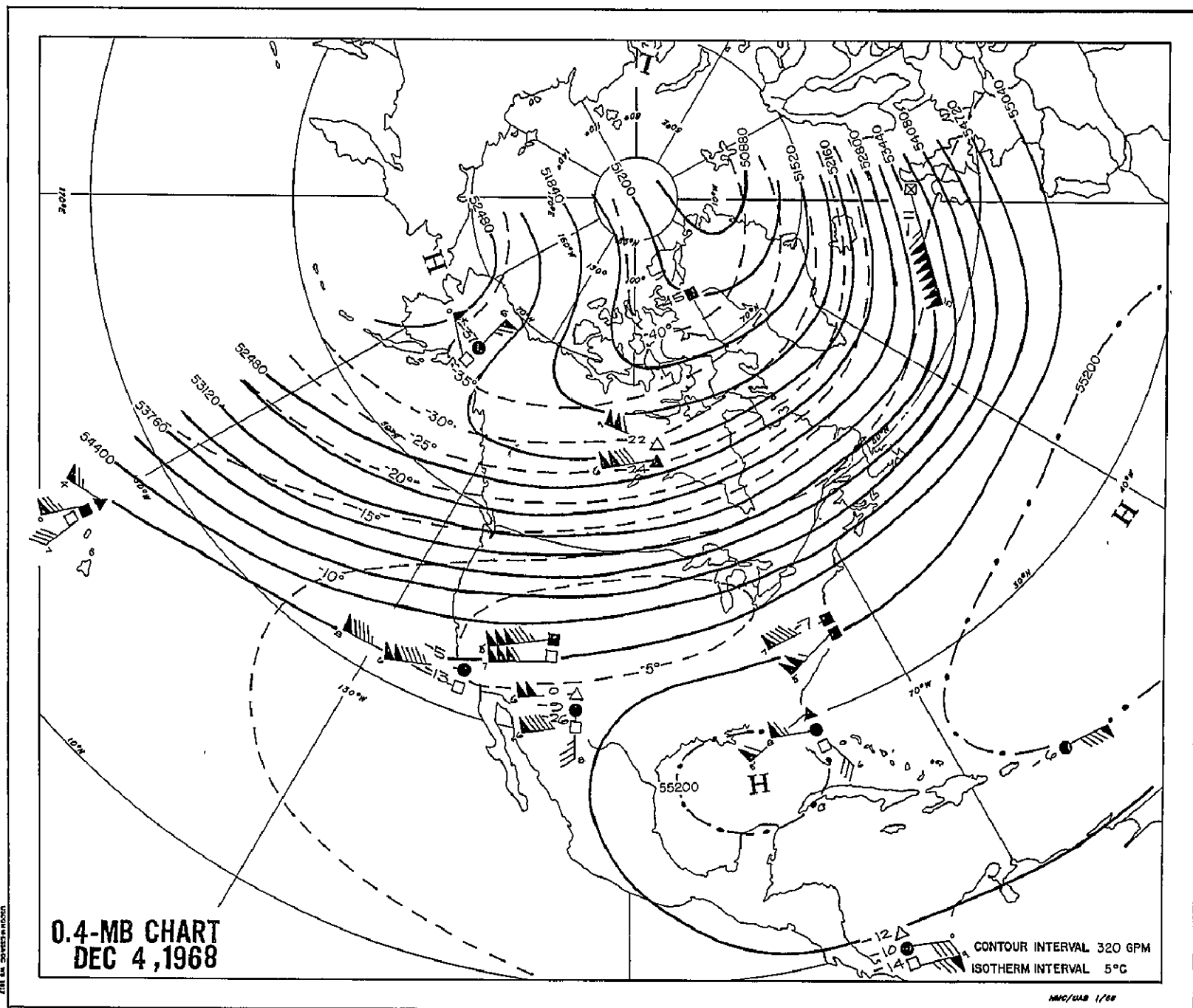




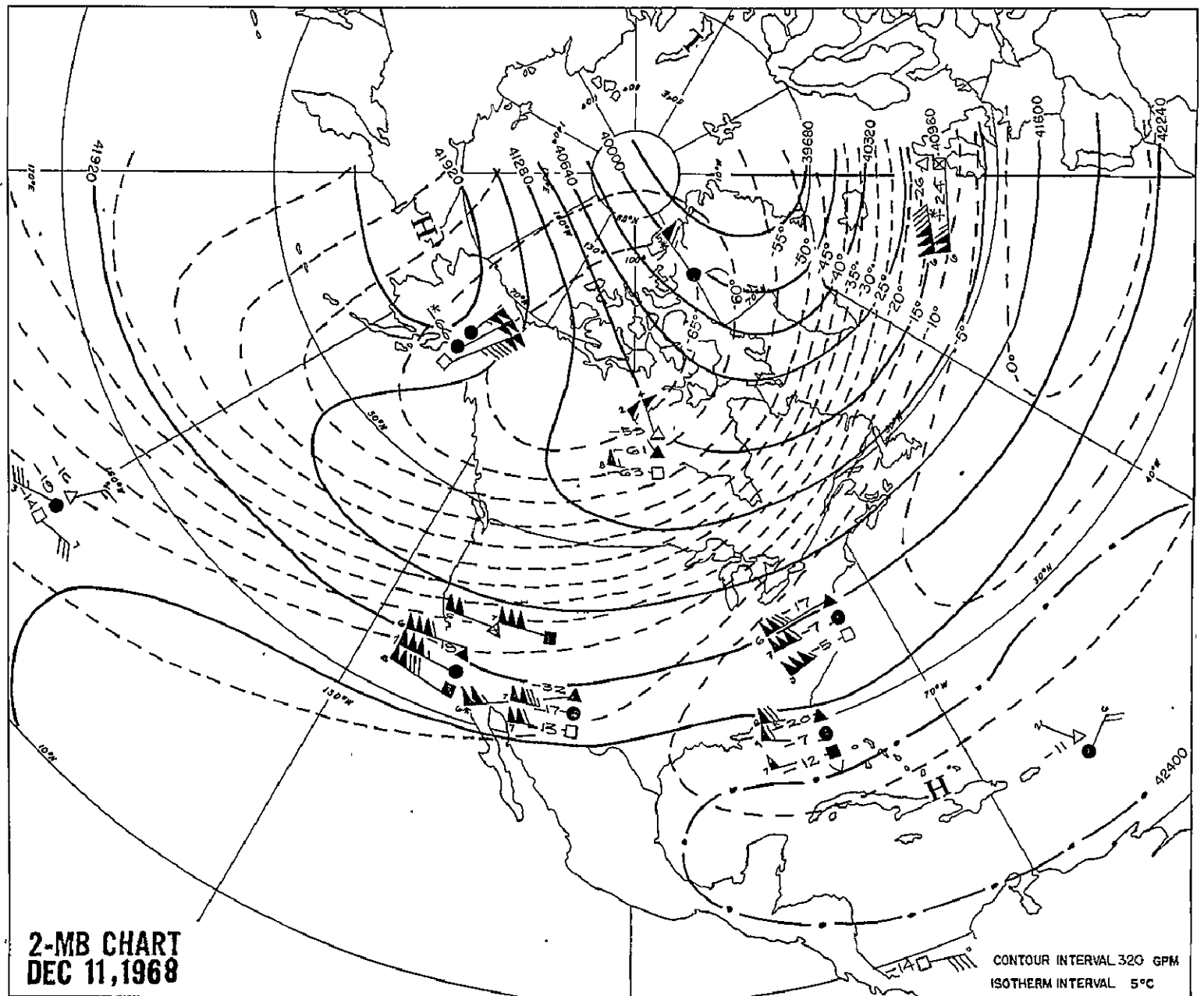








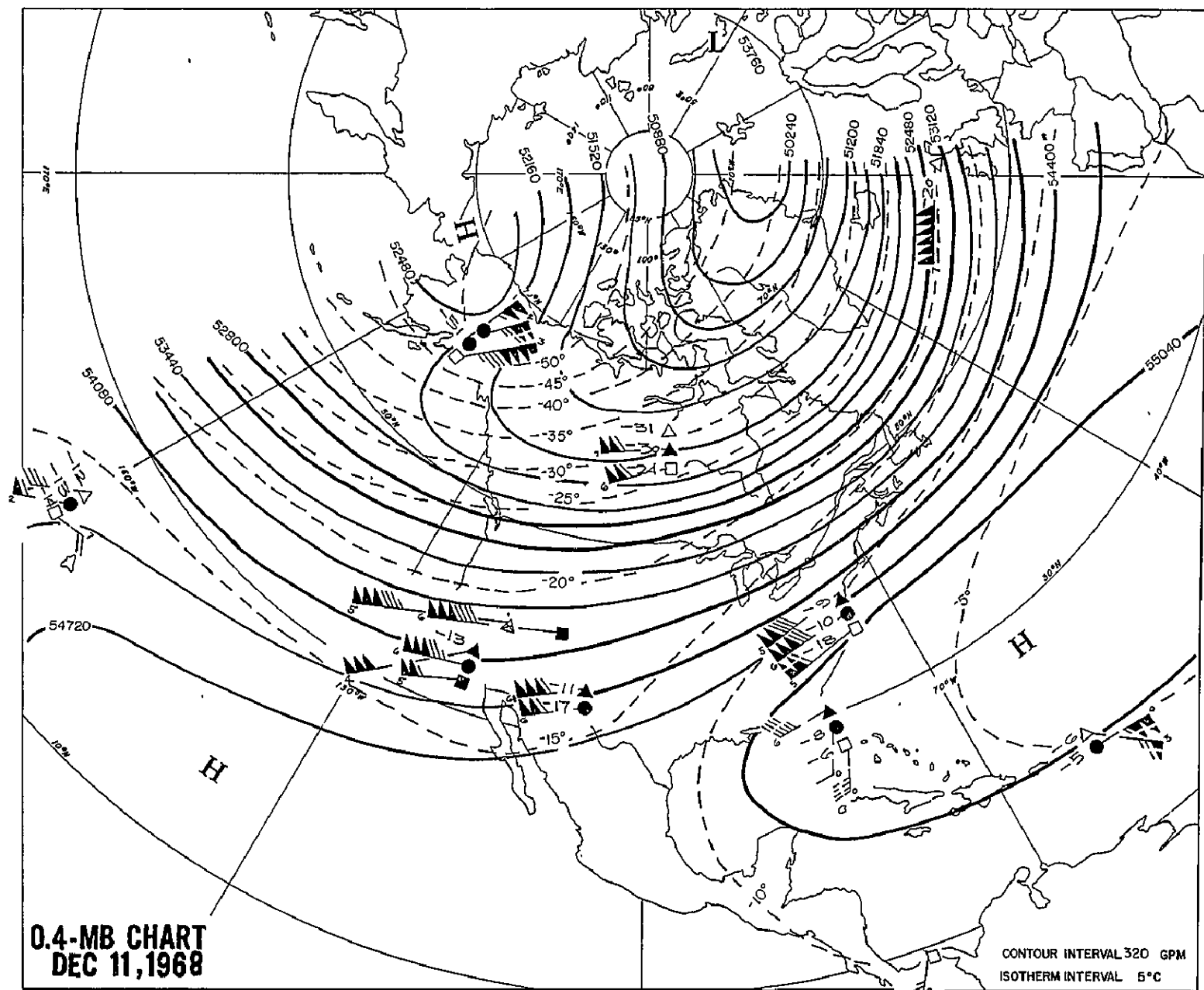




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